



Hunterdon Land Trust Comprehensive Land Preservation Plan

December 13, 2011

A framework to reach a preservation goal of an additional 10,000 acres in Hunterdon County, New Jersey in 10 years.



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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Introduction/Background

The Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT) was incorporated in 1996 as a non-profit organization committed to the preservation and protection of the rural character of Hunterdon County, New Jersey. During the last 15 years, HLT has become an extremely effective regional land trust. Through its continuing efforts, over 5,000 acres of farmland and open space have been preserved, advancing the land trust's goals to preserve ecologically and agriculturally significant land and to create a legacy for conservation and stewardship.

In 2010, the land trust completed a strategic plan to provide clarity and focus for the organization and to guide its land preservation efforts for the next ten years to maximize resources and opportunities. In its 2010 strategic plan, the organization established an ambitious goal to:

preserve another 10,000 acres of land with ecological, agricultural, scenic, recreational and community value to ensure meaningful land preservation throughout Hunterdon County.

This Comprehensive Conservation Plan provides a framework for that preservation goal and includes a geographic focus to direct preservation efforts and criteria to evaluate projects.

Hunterdon County, New Jersey: Over the past several decades, New Jersey in general and Hunterdon County specifically have experienced increased suburban sprawl in response to rising development pressures. As development rose, so did the public's support for land preservation. With passage of the Garden State Preservation Act in 1998 and subsequent grant incentives that are part of the state Green Acres and Farmland Preservation Programs, the county and most municipalities began to levy open space taxes that pay for land preservation including a recently approved dedicated tax levy for county land preservation efforts, passed by 75% voter approval in 2008.

Dr. Rick Lathrop from The Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis at Rutgers University and Dr. John Hasse from the Geospatial Research Lab at Rowan University have published a series of studies



Figure 1 Land use in Hunterdon County 2007, NJDEP LULC 2007, CRI

that document the rapid rate of land-use change in New Jersey, particularly conversion of productive farmland and forests to development ¹. In July 2010, they analyzed a statewide dataset of aerial photographs from 1986 and 2007 and found that, compared to past studies,

“what the data show is that urban development in the nation’s most densely populated state has continued unabated and in fact gained momentum up through 2007.”

They go on to note that since 2007, NJ experienced over 16,000 acres of development a year. Since 1986, an area of 507 square miles was developed statewide. This is an area larger than the size of Hunterdon County (438 square miles). Although this rate has certainly slowed due to the recent financial crisis and collapse of the real estate market, the result of this pace of development is certainly apparent to anyone who lives in Hunterdon County.

The total area of Hunterdon County is approximately 438 square miles or 280,121 acres. Of this, approximately 132,715 acres are either developed or permanently preserved as farmland or open space while approximately 147,405 acres remains undeveloped and potentially vulnerable to development. If the land use patterns of the past are any indication of the future, the next several decades will decide the fate of the remaining land of Hunterdon County.²

However, given the recent fiscal crises that the state and many municipalities are facing, as well as the general impression that a lot of open space and farmland has already been preserved, public support for land preservation is beginning to erode and public funding is dwindling. Going forward, conservation efforts will need to be prudent and widely supported.

The County of Hunterdon has developed a Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan which was adopted by the Freeholders on December 4, 2008, and a draft open space plan. However, the open space plan has not been officially adopted. The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders adopted the Open Space, Farmland Preservation and Historic Preservation Policy #:2008-02, on October 7, 2008, revised October 5, 2010. This Policy (“Policy #:2008-02”) is intended to generally outline the Practices and Procedures of the Board of Chosen Freeholders when selecting, evaluating and acquiring interests in real property for Open Space, Farmland Preservation and Historic Preservation Purposes by the County of Hunterdon. At the same time, the State, other non-profit land trusts, and individual municipalities each have their preservation targets, but these disparate plans do not provide a comprehensive forward-looking vision to preserve open space and farmland county-wide. Even if these plans were quilted together, they would not identify some important undeveloped areas in the county that warrant preservation.

Because of this lack of overall coordination of strategic open space planning, HLT realized that an inclusive planning process and analysis was necessary. In order to continue preserving open space and farmland and realize its mission, and maximize resources and opportunities, HLT felt

¹Hasse, J., R.G. Lathrop, and John Reiser, Urban Growth and Open Space Loss in NJ 1986 through 2007. <http://gis.rowan.edu/projects/luc/>

² Analysis conducted by Conservation Resources using NJDEP Land Use Land Cover Data 2007, ESRI GIS ArcDesktop.

it had to develop a more comprehensive vision for preservation throughout Hunterdon County. In addition, they wanted to continue their strong tradition of working and coordinating with public and private preservation partners and willing landowners. HLT felt it was important to make a compelling case to the public that the next several decades will decide the fate of what the county will look like and whether or not it retains its current rural charm and character, its productive farms, contiguous forests, diverse wildlife and high quality water resources.

In order to do this, HLT compiled and synthesized the county's extensive open space and farmland preservation work along with the dozens of other sources of information related to natural and cultural resources that would be helpful in creating a conservation vision.

The Victoria Foundation and the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), a national land trust advocacy and support organization, provided funding to engage Conservation Resources (CRI) to assist HLT in preparing this conservation plan and to adopt the methodology, criteria and strategies necessary to guide its future land acquisition efforts. This process and the resulting plan will also satisfy one of the critical elements needed for land trust accreditation through LTA. HLT has embarked on the accreditation process in 2011 and the development of a focused land plan is an essential element for accreditation.

This plan also presents a conservation vision that can be used in the Hunterdon Land Trust's marketing and outreach activities to better engage the public in land preservation activities. It prioritizes project areas based on funding, local political support, and other opportunities. At the same time, the conservation plan is spatially explicit and can be used as a planning and project management tool to target specific parcels for open space and farmland preservation. The plan identifies six Project Regions, with 22 Target Areas within these regions.

This plan establishes a long term vision. The land trust recognizes that its success in any given Project Region or Target Area is dependent upon willing landowners, conservation financing, and supportive partnerships. Further, the community's input and participation in this land preservation plan are essential to its realization. The land trust board and staff will review this plan every two years to ensure that it continues to represent preservation goals and objectives, and will update the plan accordingly.

Methodology – Creating a Comprehensive Land Preservation Plan

Existing Open Space Planning Efforts and Data

Open space and farmland preservation initiatives throughout New Jersey have been guided by numerous conservation plans as well as other data that can be used in strategic conservation planning. At virtually every level there are plans and accompanying maps ranging from local municipalities' open space plans to important natural and agricultural resource areas identified by state agencies and non-profit organizations. In order to effectively and efficiently develop a comprehensive land preservation plan for the Hunterdon Land Trust, CRI collected and evaluated the most pertinent GIS data, both internally from HLT and externally from the County and State agencies.

In 2005, HLT developed general land preservation project criteria that guided their land preservation activities (Appendix 1). From a geographic standpoint, the criteria identified five broad regions; the Highlands, the Delaware River Corridor, the Musconetcong River corridor, the Lockatong Creek Corridor, and the Alexauken Creek Corridor. HLT targeted lands with important environmental, recreational, scenic, historic, and/or agricultural values. The 2005 criteria place a priority on lands adjacent to already preserved lands, properties that are reasonably priced with willing sellers, and/or properties threatened with development.

Although the land trust's 2005 land preservation criteria provided a framework for identifying and targeting specific preservation parcels, they were not spatially explicit, meaning the 2005 project areas were simply large geographic areas of the county, like the Highlands, but lacked any target areas or criteria to help prioritize projects within those regions.

Since these original land preservation criteria were developed, the land trust has experienced significant organizational growth and preservation accomplishments, including the creation of dedicated preservation staff positions and increased capacity to leverage more grant dollars for preservation transactions. HLT is able to complete more transactions and has expanded its work throughout the county. Given these factors, the land trust recognizes that these 2005 criteria and project areas are too broad and lack the focus needed to direct its preservation efforts and provide an adequate filter to gauge potential projects.

In addition to the land trust's own preservation goals, Hunterdon County's agricultural preservation plan and draft open space plan were both reviewed and included in this planning process. Both of these plans had parcel-specific mapping completed, which made display and subsequent analysis easier.

HLT views the county's own vision for land preservation as integral to long term preservation success. By complementing and supporting the county's vision, the land trust can bring more out-of-county conservation dollars to the table, maximize grant leveraging, and ensure that

mutual preservation goals are met. Finally, a number of natural resource GIS data sets were used, including critical area mapping from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Endangered and Threatened Species Program Landscape Project (both the highlands specific data and the statewide data), Natural Heritage Priority Sites, conservation and agricultural preservation priorities from the NJ Highland Council, and Garden State Greenways. Tax parcel data was available for the entire County, which allowed the identification of specific properties.

Planning Workshop

CRI facilitated an interactive workshop with the Board of Trustees and staff of the Hunterdon Land Trust on June 4, 2011. The purpose of the workshop was to help HLT staff and trustees develop preservation criteria and select and map the priority lands which HLT will seek to protect in the next 5-10 years to achieve the goal to *"Preserve 10,000 acres of land with Ecological, Agricultural, Scenic, Recreational and Community value to ensure meaningful land preservation throughout Hunterdon County."*

The Workshop consisted of an introductory briefing and two interactive exercises (see Appendix 2 for a detailed agenda of the workshop). The first exercise focused on identifying the potential places to be protected, or Project Regions. The participants used large GIS maps that consisted of 2007 color aerial photographs, existing protected open space and preserved farmland, the County Farmland Preservation Plan, the draft County Open Space Plan, and parcels greater than 40 acres in size. Using permanent markers, the board and staff outlined areas on the map that included parcels with high resource value (good soils, wildlife habitat), adjacent to already preserved properties, and targeted in other conservation plans.

In the second exercise, the HLT Board and staff prioritized Target Areas within larger Project Regions. These Target Areas are smaller areas within the Project Regions where HLT would focus its efforts in the short term and pursue preservation opportunities. During this session, HLT identified existing and potential funding partners within each of these Target Areas, explored whether or not there were known landowners willing to preserve their properties, and categorized the local political will and resources for preservation.

The board then prioritized two kinds of Target Areas—those where HLT would take the lead, and those where HLT would play a secondary role and support a partner that had taken the lead—to focus its proactive preservation efforts in the next 5-10 years to meet the strategic plan goal of 10,000 more acres preserved in Hunterdon County.

Refining the Plan: After the Workshop

The workshop results were digitized and compared to the natural resource data and other plans previously identified to create a draft land-parcel specific plan. At the workshop, the board and staff identified 13 Project Regions. After the workshop, HLT staff and board members further refined the maps, consolidating the Project Regions into a total of 6, each with their own Target

Areas of focus. Additionally, some Target Area boundaries were broadened to capture parcels with high resource value.

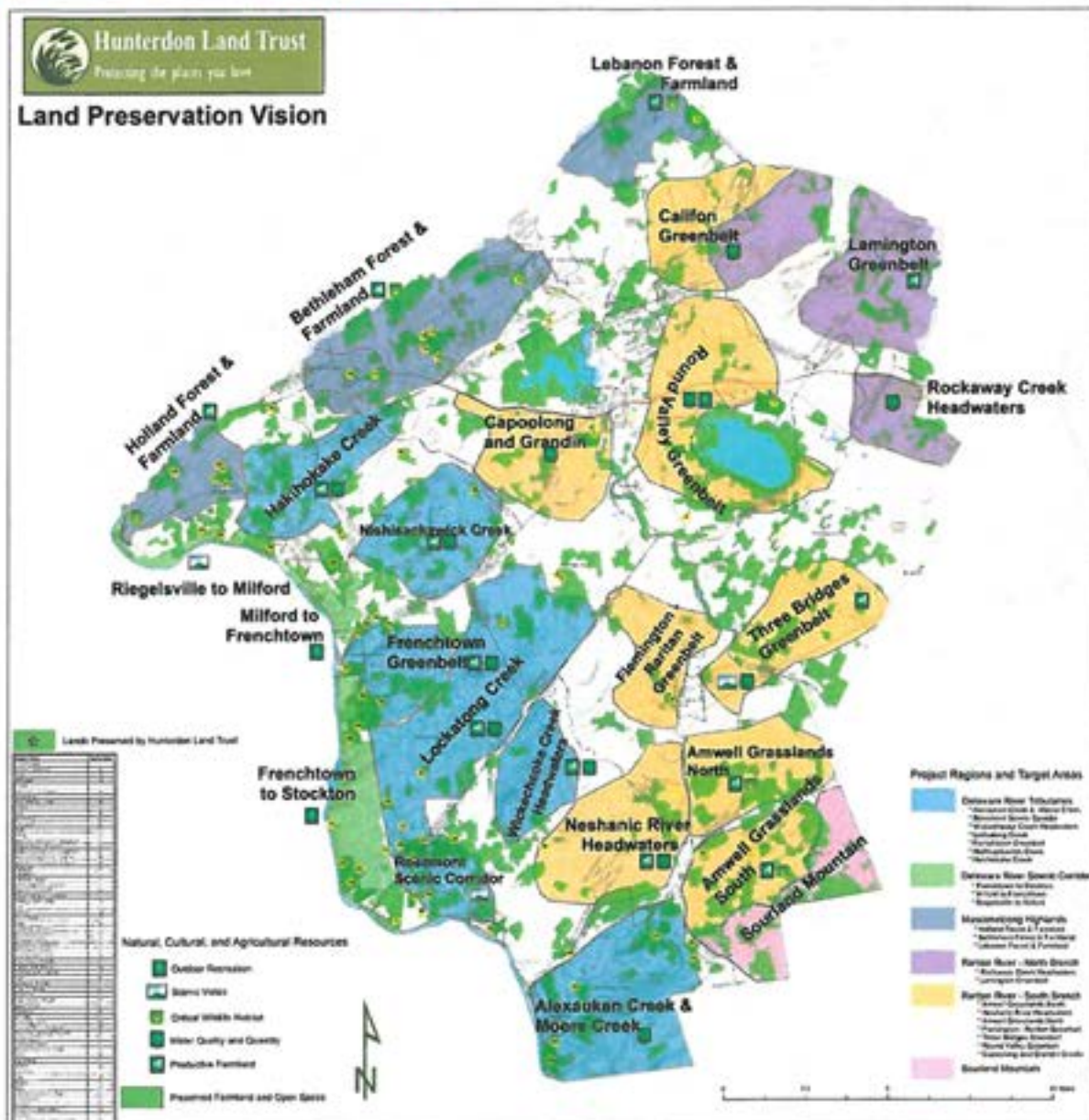
The conservation plan contains six Project Regions: Delaware River Tributaries, Delaware River Scenic Corridor, Musconetcong Highlands, Raritan River – North Branch, Raritan River – South Branch, and Sourland Mountain. These six project areas include 22 Target Areas.

In developing the GIS maps, tax parcel-based data was used to identify specific target properties. This underlying data is linked to public ownership records and will be used as a tool by HLT to proactively approach and educate landowners about the benefits of preserving their land. Parcels 40 acres or greater were identified because it was the minimum acreage size to be included in the County's Farmland Preservation Plan. This minimum acreage size will also allow additional focused targeting of lands and prioritization for the land trust.

A general law of land conservation is the bigger the parcel size and the larger the area of preserved open space and/or preserved farmland, the better. From a Farmland Preservation perspective, having a critical mass of farms is important so that they can adequately support needed associated industries such as seed and fertilizer stores and farming equipment sales and repairs. Having core areas of agriculture also ensures that farmland remains part of the local culture. For Open Space, many of the natural resource attributes are only found on larger parcels. Most if not all threatened and endangered species in New Jersey need large areas of habitat that only large protected areas provide. Water quality and quantity is better protected with large tracts. Finally, from an organizational operational perspective, preserving a small property takes just as much time and energy as protecting large properties. The 40-acre threshold strikes this balance. This does not mean that parcels smaller than 40 acres should not be preserved. Valuable small parcels will be found in more developed areas of the county, in situations involving greenway connector parcels, or when adding onto already preserved open spaces. Some of these important parcels that are less than 40 acres were also identified in this plan.

Hunterdon Land Trust's Comprehensive Land Preservation Plan

Project Regions and Target Areas



Hunterdon Land Trust has identified six Project Regions. Within these six Regions there are 22 Target Areas.

- Project Region: Delaware River Scenic Corridor
Target Areas:
 - Riegelsville to Milford
 - Milford to Frenchtown
 - Frenchtown to Stockton
- Project Region: Delaware River Tributaries
Target Areas:
 - Nishisakawick Creek
 - Lockatong Creek
 - Rosemont Scenic Corridor
 - Frenchtown Greenbelt; Little Nishisakawick Creek, Copper Creek
 - Hakiwok Creek
 - Wickecheoke Creek Headwaters
 - Alexauken Creek & Moore Creek
- Project Region: Musconetcong Highlands
Target Areas:
 - Lebanon Forests & Farmland
 - Bethlehem Forest & Farmland
 - Holland Forest & Farmland
- Project Region: Raritan River North Branch
Target Areas:
 - Lamington Greenbelt
 - Rockaway Creek Headwaters
- Project Region: Raritan River South Branch
Target Areas:
 - Califon Greenbelt (portions in South Branch Project Area)
 - Amwell Grasslands North and South
 - Three Bridges Greenbelt
 - Round Valley Greenbelt
 - Flemington Raritan Greenbelt
 - Capoolong and Grandin
 - Neshanic River Headwaters
- Project Region: Sourland Mountain Project Area

The ability to work in all Target Areas at any time is determined by organizational capacity, funding partners, willing landowners and public support. Therefore, the land trust will prioritize Target Areas based on capacity and opportunity and will review those priorities annually and adjust as needed.

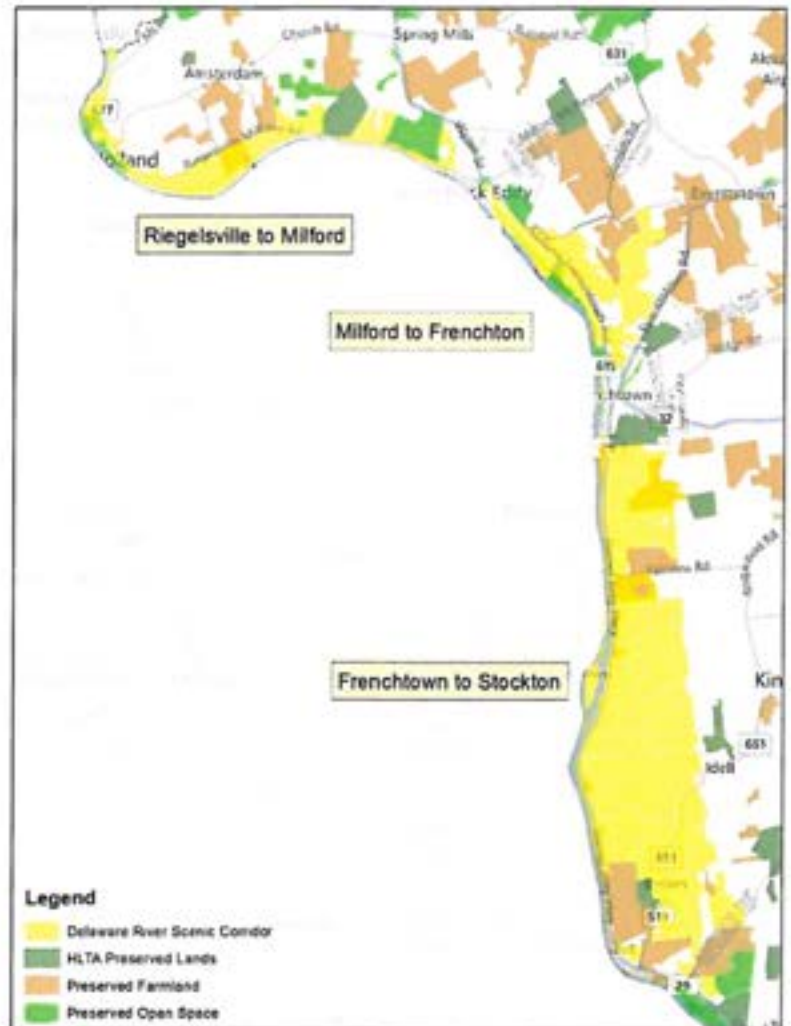
Each Project Region and Target Area encompasses unique natural, agricultural, and cultural landscapes which, in turn, impart unique challenges and opportunities for land preservation.

The following is a summary of each Region that makes up HLT's strategic vision for preservation. Included are some of HLT's accomplishments in each Region and some of the partners with whom HLT works to achieve preservation goals. Also included is a brief description of the Target Areas within the Regions.

Project Region: Delaware River Scenic Corridor

Stretching roughly between the Borough of Stockton to the town of Riegelsville, The Delaware River Corridor Project Region consists of land within two miles of the Delaware River. Spectacular natural vistas, forested ravines, historic villages, and critical trail connectors are some of the natural and cultural resources in this area. Seven municipalities are included in this Project Region: Holland Township, Milford Borough, Alexandria Township, Frenchtown Borough, Kingwood Township, Stockton Borough and Delaware Township.

Perhaps the most well-known public park in the area is the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, which contains the D&R Canal Tow Path, one of the most popular multi-use trails in the state. This region boasts spectacular views of the Delaware River Valley, across to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and State Route 29, the first designated scenic byway in New Jersey and also a designated Federal Scenic Byway. This stretch of the Delaware River has also received federal Scenic & Recreational River designation, with the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Committee and the National Park Service charged with implementation of a management plan for the corridor to protect scenic values and water quality and expand and improve public recreational opportunities.



Creating buffers of preserved land along the Delaware River will help maintain wildlife habitat critical to both aquatic and terrestrial species. Many species of migratory fish such as American shad travel far up the Delaware River to breed. This culturally important species (the City of Lambertville Shad Fest is a popular annual event) needs clean water to breed. The state endangered bald eagle is known to utilize the banks of the Delaware River as foraging habitat. Preservation of land and maintenance of adequate natural buffers along the river as well as preventing additional development, thereby reducing runoff, will help to protect bald eagles,

shad and many other species. HLT will focus on protecting the small, steeply wooded tributaries of the Delaware River, preserving the scenic vistas from Route 29, and protecting the rolling farmland above the river.

Past efforts:

This region has been a high priority for the Hunterdon Land Trust from the beginning of the organization. Since 1996, the land trust has facilitated the permanent preservation of 1968 acres of land. Some of these projects are as follows:

Frenchtown Preserve (150 acres): HLT assembled a number of partners for the preservation effort to permanently protect 148-acres of critical watershed land in Frenchtown Borough, the last, large undeveloped tract of land in the town. Participants included the state of New Jersey Green Acres Program, Hunterdon County, and Frenchtown Borough. The property was zoned for high density development and an assessment of the site determined that as many as 117 residential units could have been built on the property.

Horseshoe Bend Park (250 acres) and Copper Creek Preserve (76 acres): HLT recently participated in the preservation of the Horseshoe Bend Park and Copper Creek Preserve, 326 contiguous acres of open space and farmland saved from development. This project took over 10 years of land trust effort, multiple funding partners, creativity and persistence. In the last decade, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and HLT attempted to preserve this acreage, extending an offer to the landowner and beginning to secure funds. After that effort failed, NJCF and HLT remained persistent and hopeful, despite a Pennsylvania developer purchasing the property and securing development approvals for 58 houses, called "equestrian estates". By this time, early 2007, the state, HLT, and NJCF had secured adjoining properties. The state of NJ took the funding lead and acquired these sites for the state park system (Flagg and Kirkland). HLT and NJCF negotiated the purchase of this property, achieving success in 2011, despite roadblocks and funding disappointments along the way. Kingwood Township and the state of New Jersey joined the land trusts in preserving this property as farmland and parkland, to be managed with adjoining lands for passive recreation and nature enjoyment by the public.

Mergott in Kingwood Township (220 acres): In November 2001 HLT announced the preservation of the Kugler Woods. This 220-acre property is almost entirely wooded with mature specimen hardwoods. It is a well-managed forest that has colonial history going back to pre-revolutionary times. Named after its 18th century owner, the Kugler Woods provided timber for the famous Rodham Boat Works at the edge of the property. Here the Durham boats were built to haul lime from Easton, upriver. The lime was used for agriculture and the building trades, but the boats were also used by General George Washington for the surprise Christmas crossing downstream in Trenton. These wooded hills have many magnificent sugar maples and the present owner has run a successful gravity-assisted maple syrup operation, believed to be Hunterdon's only one. This was HLT's first preservation in its Delaware Bluffs project area and it is a property that shows off the best of Hunterdon.

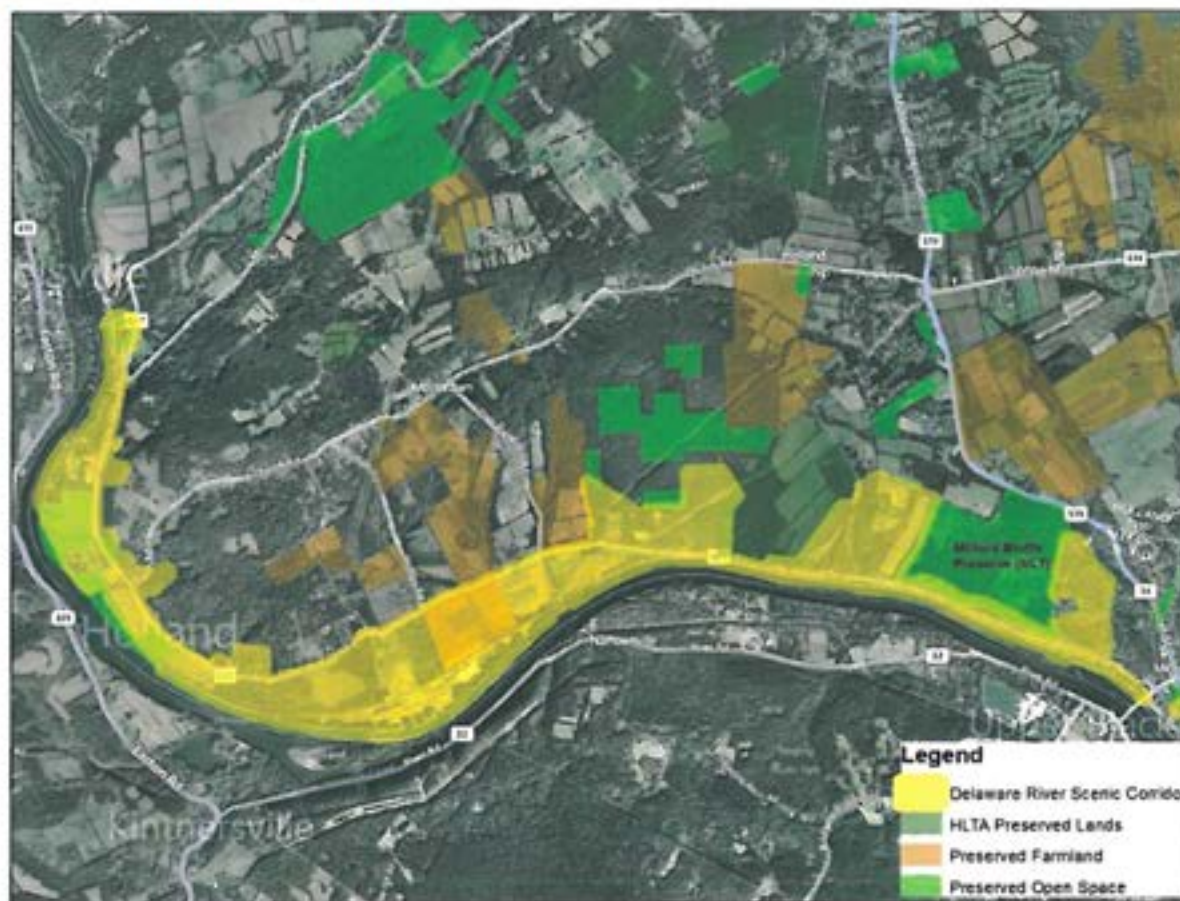
Preservation Partners:

The State Green Acres Program is the most active partner in the region, and municipal support for open space and farmland preservation varies; Delaware Township and Kingwood Township have been strong municipal partners in this region. New Jersey Conservation Foundation is an active and supportive nonprofit partner. Hunterdon County has not had a strong showing as a lead player in this region in recent years, despite it being identified as a priority area in the county's draft preservation plan. However the County has provided nonprofit grants to HLT, Raritan Headwaters Association and D&R Greenway for projects in this area. The state farmland preservation program is another funding partner and HLT has had luck in securing both state and federal farmland preservation funds for projects in this region based on the quality of soils. The Department of Transportation has provided needed preservation funding along the Scenic Byway, which is Route 29 between Frenchtown and Stockton.

Target Areas:

The land trust has identified three Target Areas within The Delaware River Corridor Project Region: **Riegelsville to Milford, Milford to Frenchtown, and Frenchtown to Stockton**, the last one being a short-term, high priority for focused efforts with strong partnerships. Descriptions of the Target Areas within the Delaware River Scenic Corridor Project Region follow.

Riegelsville to Milford Target Area



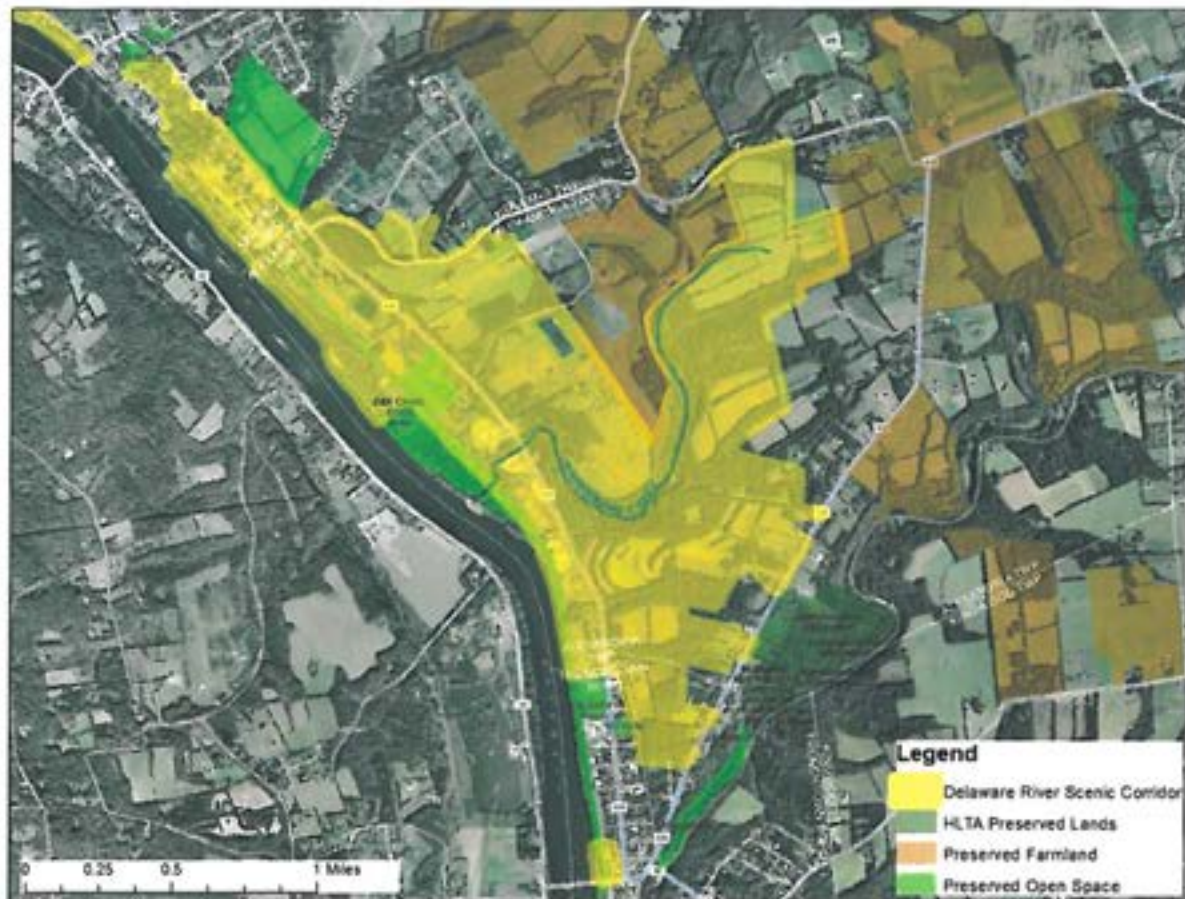
Total Acreage Identified for Preservation - 438 acres

Total HLT Preserved Acreage - 476 acres

The Riegelsville to Milford Target Area consists of a narrow area of land along the Delaware River from Holland Township to Frenchtown Borough. It includes some industrial properties listed by the NJDEP as known contaminated sites including the Gilbert Generating Station and Corrugated Paper Group, Inc.

This Area also includes the Milford Bluffs Natural Heritage Site, most of which has already been protected by the Natural Lands Trust. The Milford Bluffs Natural Heritage Site contains a natural red shale cliff community with rare and endangered plant species. The landscape project also identifies open fields in this area as important habitat for rare grassland bird species including Vesper sparrow.

Milford to Frenchtown Target Area



Total Acreage Identified for Preservation - 531 acres

Total HLT Preserved Acreage – 422 acres

The Milford to Frenchtown Target Area falls within Holland and Alexandria Townships and Frenchtown Borough. The Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park forms a small protected greenway along the river. Like the Riegelsville to Milford Target Area, there are a few properties bordering the river that are on the DEP's list of known contaminated sites, including Curtis Paper, Inc. in Milford. However, the majority of the land in this area consists of farmland and forest.

The Hakiwokake Creek is a small, wooded tributary to the Delaware that is currently largely unprotected. Preservation efforts in this area should focus on expanding the D&R Canal State Park and protecting the forest and farmland along the Hakiwokake Creek. See more on the Hakiwokake in the Delaware River Tributaries Project Region below.

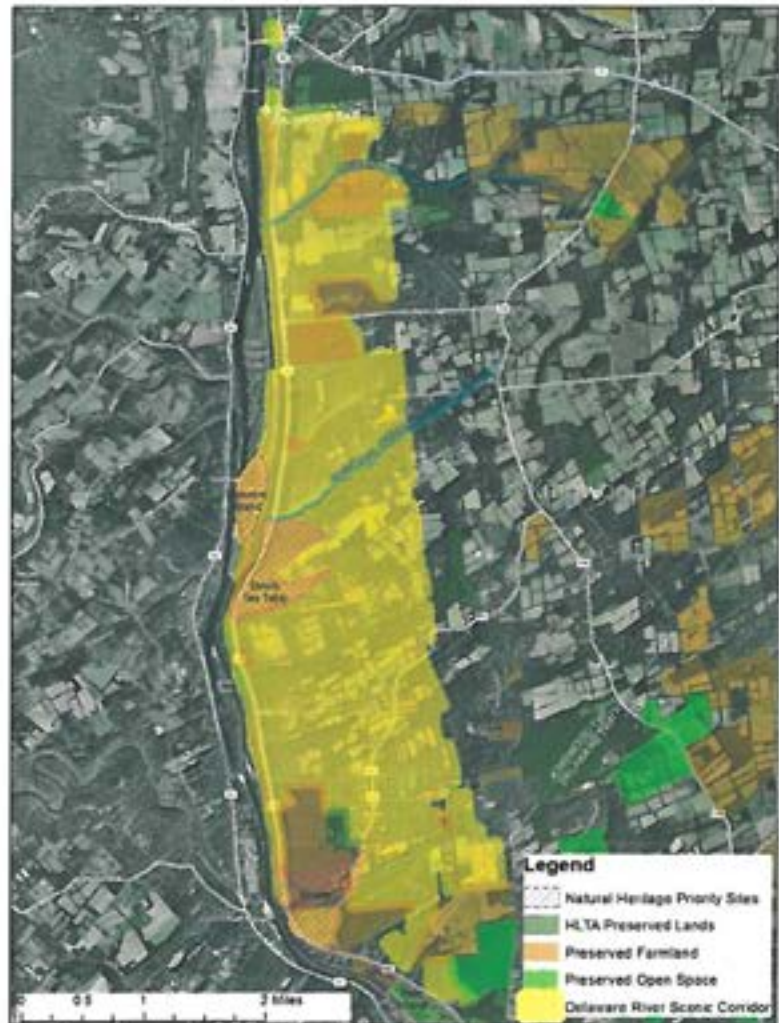
Frenchtown to Stockton Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for
Preservation – 2,271 acres

Total HLT Preserved Acreage – 477
acres

Frenchtown to Stockton Target Area is the largest Target Area within the Delaware River Scenic Corridor Project Area. Mostly located in Kingwood Township, it encompasses some of the hilliest terrain along the Delaware in Hunterdon County and contains several iconic sites including Treasure Island and Devil's Tea Table. Like the rest of the Delaware River Corridor, this area is a mixture of farms and forests.

Three Natural Heritage Priority sites are located here as well: Byram, Devil's Tea Table, and Treasure Island. Each of these sites provides habitat for rare plants. In addition to several small, intermittent tributaries to the Delaware, there are two larger tributaries within this Target Area, Copper Creek and Warford Creek.



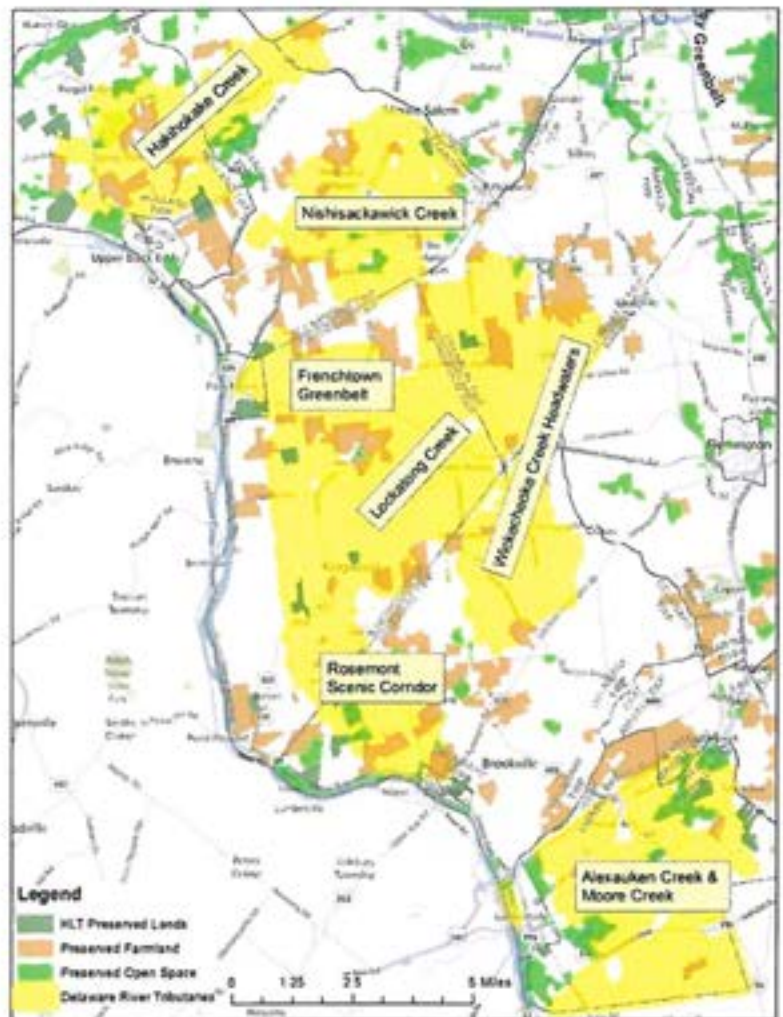
Project Region: Delaware River Tributaries

The Delaware River Tributaries Project Region encompasses the watersheds of the streams of Hunterdon County that feed directly into the Delaware River. Many of the creek names are unique and are beloved by the locals. These include the Hahokake Creek, Nishisakawick Creek, Lockatong Creek, Alexauken Creek, and the Wickecheoke Creek. The Frenchtown Greenbelt, Rosemont Scenic Corridor, and the Moore Creek are also part of the large Project Region.

The Region includes portions of six municipalities: Holland Township, Alexandria Township, Franklin Township, Kingwood Township, Delaware Township, and West Amwell Township. This is primarily an agricultural landscape, and although there has been much farmland preservation activity, there still remains more to be accomplished. The stream corridors and adjoining wetlands, vital to maintain wildlife and water quality and quantity should also be preserved.

Protection of drinking water supply is also a priority in this region considering that the D & R Canal is fed by the Delaware River, which serves millions of water users in central New Jersey; these tributaries are important to the overall water quality of the Canal.

Building off of what the land trust has already accomplished in this region, particularly in the Nishisakawick, Lockatong, and Alexauken Creek watersheds is a goal, focusing on parcels that link to already preserved lands, both farmland and open space, to provide for continuity for recreation and protection of habitat, as well as water quality protection. Securing the last, large remaining tracts of land in this region is also a goal.



Past efforts:

In 2008, HLT preserved two family farms on Ridge Road in Kingwood and Alexandria Township, known as Middleton and Ramirez. HLT holds and monitors the farmland easements on these properties. In 2010, HLT preserved the Stamets farm in Holland Township, working with a conservation buyer who purchased the restricted farm.

The Hunterdon Land Trust has focused efforts along the Lockatong Creek since its incorporation and has preserved 767 acres in this Target Area.

Lockatong Preserve: The land trust assembled its Lockatong Preserve through three separate land acquisition projects over three years (2003 – 2006)—the 34 acre Zega property, the 34 acre Henderson property, and the 103 acre Peters property. The first two transactions were lead by the land trust, using Green Acres funding, county nonprofit funds, and municipal funds; the Peters transaction was a direct partnership between the county and the land trust and resulted with both entities holding joint title to the property, with the county managing it under a management agreement. The Lockatong Preserve was the land trust's first real success, showing how years of diligent preservation work and assembling adjoining properties can result in the development of a community asset. The Lockatong Preserve remains one of the land trust's most popular properties with many visits to the Mimi Upmeyer Trail, a hiking trail on the Zega property that allows visitors to enjoy the beauty of the Lockatong Creek corridor.

HLT has a history of working in this area with its Alexauken Creek Watershed Project. It has also worked in partnership with D&R Greenway Land Trust on the Moore's Creek Greenway (south of Lambertville). There are several areas of preserved open space including Washington Crossing State Park along the Delaware, United Water Company land in West Amwell, Dondero conservation easement in West Amwell, and the Howell Living History Farm, just over the border in Mercer County.

Hunterdon Land Trust has worked with partners to preserve several large properties in the Rosemont Scenic Corridor Target area including the Thompson property and the Harms property on Route 519.

Preservation Partners:

Delaware Township and Kingwood Township have been strong preservation partners—the will to preserve more exists; the limiting factor is the availability of funding. Leveraging funds from other sources and not overwhelming municipal partners with limited resources are important strategies to long term success here. The NJ Water Supply Authority is a funding partner within the *Lockatong Creek Target Area*, provided individual parcels meet their natural resource criteria. The State of New Jersey Green Acres Program is a recent partner in this Project Region, provided land meets the criteria for management by the Division of Fish and Wildlife or the Division of Parks and Forestry. West Amwell has funded projects in the *Alexauken Creek Target Area* in the past, but future participation is not certain. Farmland preservation funding is also a possibility. Holland Township and the County nonprofit grant program have been funding partners in the past. Alexandria Township has not partnered with the land trust on past

projects and is unlikely to fund open space acquisitions, more likely to fund farmland preservation projects at this time.

Potential partners in the *Frenchtown Greenbelt Target Area* include Frenchtown Borough, the Green Acres State Direct program, SADC (grants and direct), the Federal farmland preservation program, and Kingwood Township. The Hunterdon County nonprofit grant program has been utilized for past projects and projects will likely rank high for that program, given the recreational opportunities and natural resource value of this area.

Similar to the *Wickecheoke Creek Target Area*, the partners for the *Rosemont Scenic Corridor Target Area* include D&R Greenway Land Trust and New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Kingwood and Delaware Townships.

Target Areas:

Hunterdon Land Trust has identified six Target Areas within the Delaware River Tributaries Project Region: **Hakihokake Creek, Frenchtown Greenbelt, Lockatong Creek, Wickecheoke Creek Headwaters, Rosemont Scenic Corridor, and Alexauken Creek & Moore Creek**. Descriptions of these Target Areas follow.

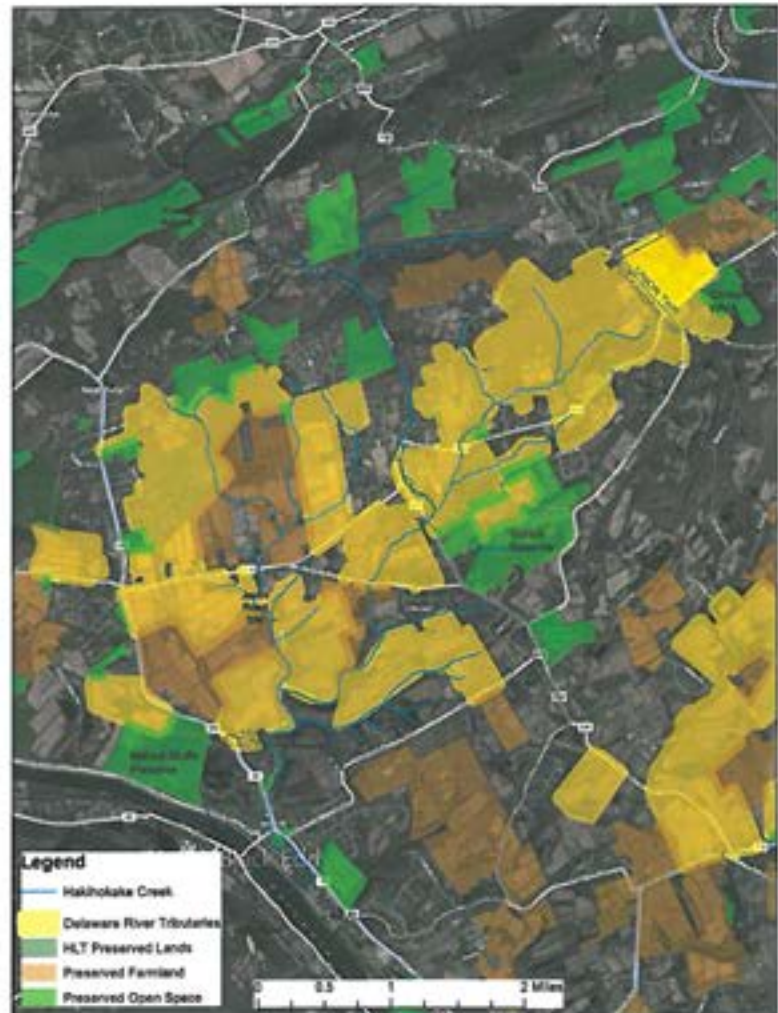
Hakihokake Creek Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 2,455 acres

HLT Preserved acreage - 211

Located in Alexandria, Union and Holland Townships, the Hakihokake Creek Preservation Priority is an area where Hunterdon County has preserved a lot of farmland. There are also several parks and open space parcels in the area including the County-owned Schick Reserve. The NJ Natural Lands Trust owns and manages the Milford Bluffs Preserve and Sweet Hollow Preserve. Units of the Clinton Wildlife Management Area fall within the area.

Farmland preservation activity in the region should continue in order to develop an even more concentrated area of preserved farmland. In addition, expansion of the Schick Reserve, Clinton Wildlife Management Area, and the Milford Bluffs Preserve would help to ensure preservation of water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, and provide nature oriented public recreational opportunities.

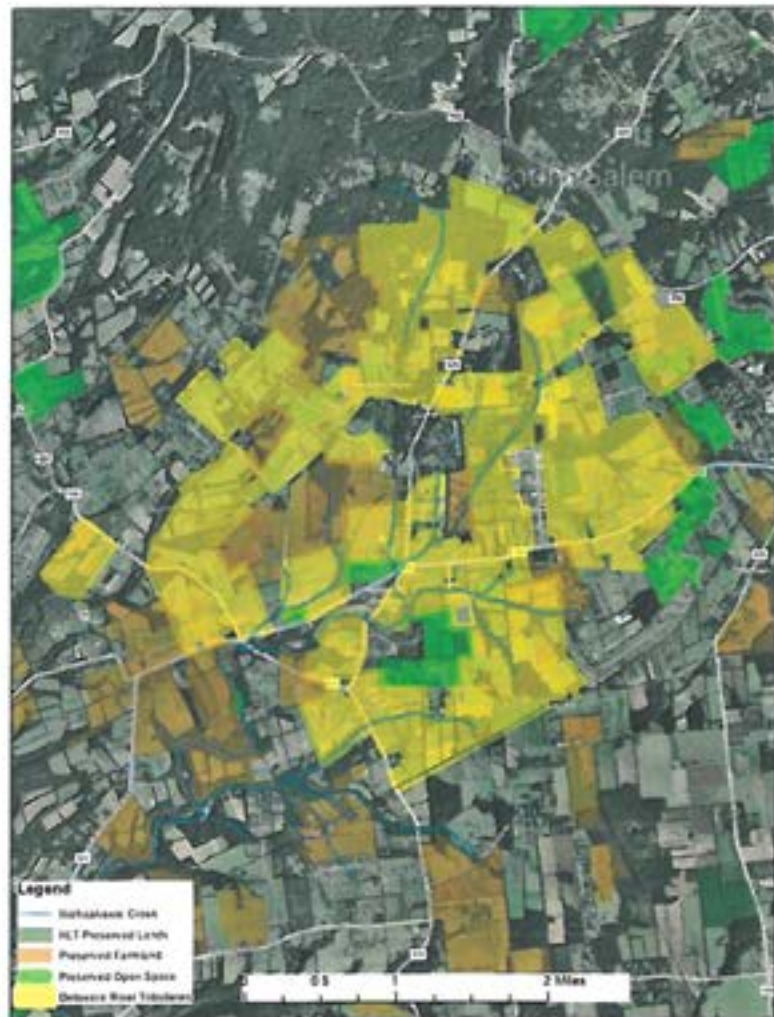


Nishisakawick Creek Target Area

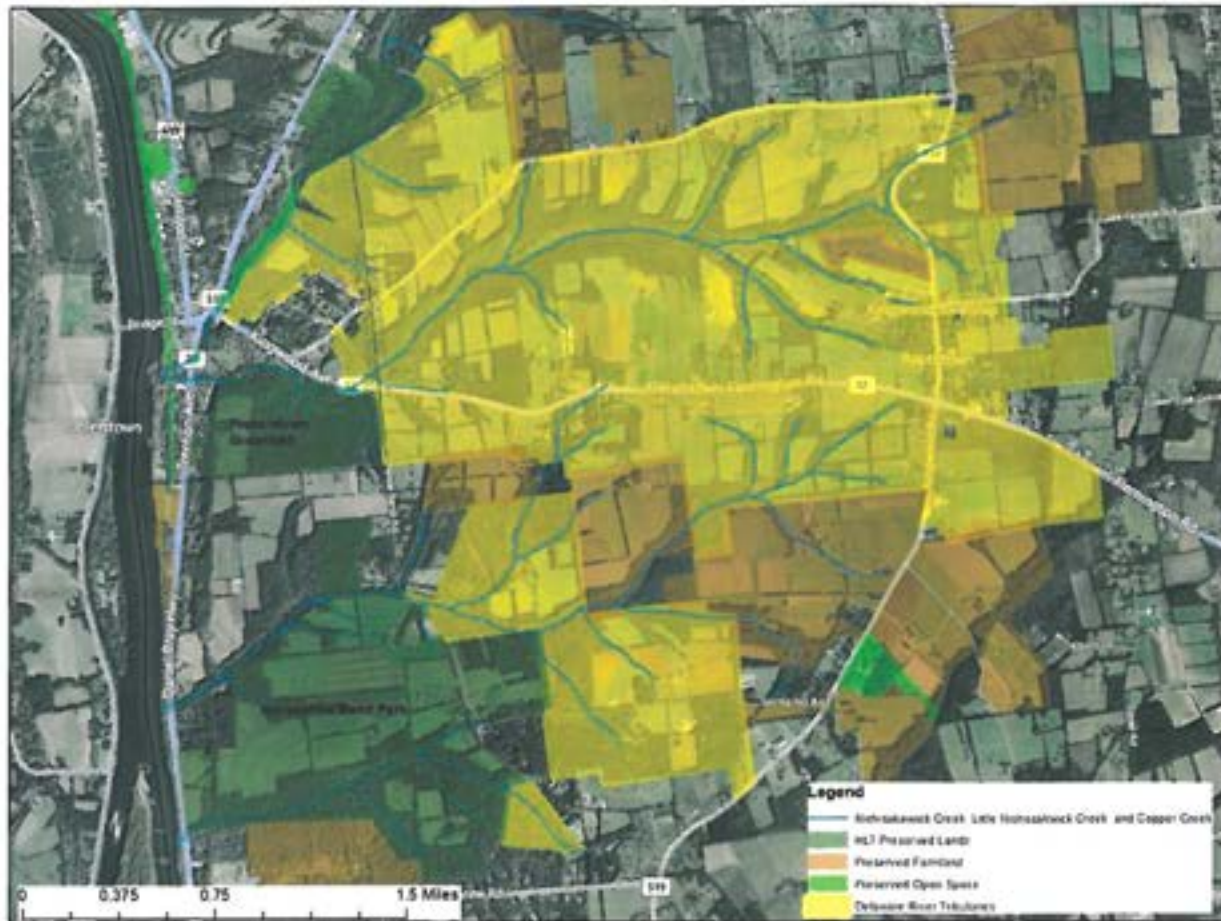
Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 2,882 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage- 43 acres

Located in Alexandria Township, the Nishisakawick Creek Priority Area consists mostly of farmland. The NJDEP Landscape Project identifies these farms as providing habitat for rare grassland birds such as bobolink and well as the state-threatened wood turtle. The Nishisackawick is a relatively new Target Area for the land trust.



Frenchtown Greenbelt Target Area (including Little Nishisakawick Creek and Copper Creek)



Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 1,922 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-639 acres

The area is primarily agricultural with significant farmland preservation having happened on the periphery. The steep, forested ravines of the Little Nishisakawick Creek and the Copper Creek form corridors of important wildlife habitat and should also be protected.



Lockatong Creek Target Area

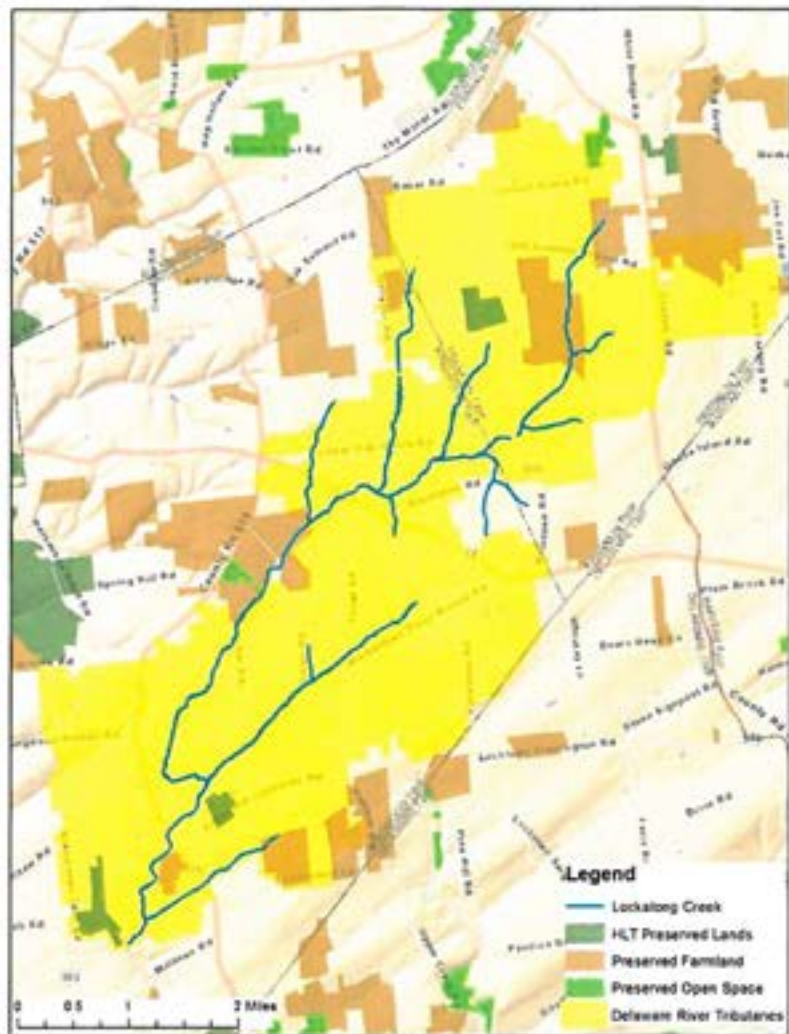
Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 5,529 acres

Hunterdon Land Trust Preserved acres: 767

HLT has focused its efforts in the Lockatong Creek watershed since its founding in 1996. This watershed spans from Franklin Township, through Delaware and Kingwood. The Lockatong Creek Preservation Priority Area is one of the largest priority areas being targeted by Hunterdon Land Trust.

This region contains forested and agricultural properties. HLT has focused on woodland preservation in this area up to now. HLT is currently working on farmland preservation funding programs in this area. Funding depends upon soil quality.

Hunterdon Land Trust has been successful at preserving open space in this area with acquisitions including the Lockatong Preserve and easements including Meadow Creek. HLT began its efforts in this area in Delaware Township, with project activity increasing in Franklin Township and Kingwood in recent years. NJ Audubon has worked with HLT in this watershed because of the high value bird habitat that exists. State of New Jersey, Division of Fish and Wildlife manages some properties in this watershed as wildlife management areas, after the State Green Acres Program acquires those properties through the direct state acquisition program. The New Jersey Water Supply Authority has begun to evaluate the quality of this watershed and fund restoration activities in an attempt to improve the quality of the stream for drinking water purposes. The Lockatong Creek feeds into the D & R Canal, which is managed by the Authority as a drinking water supply for central New Jersey.

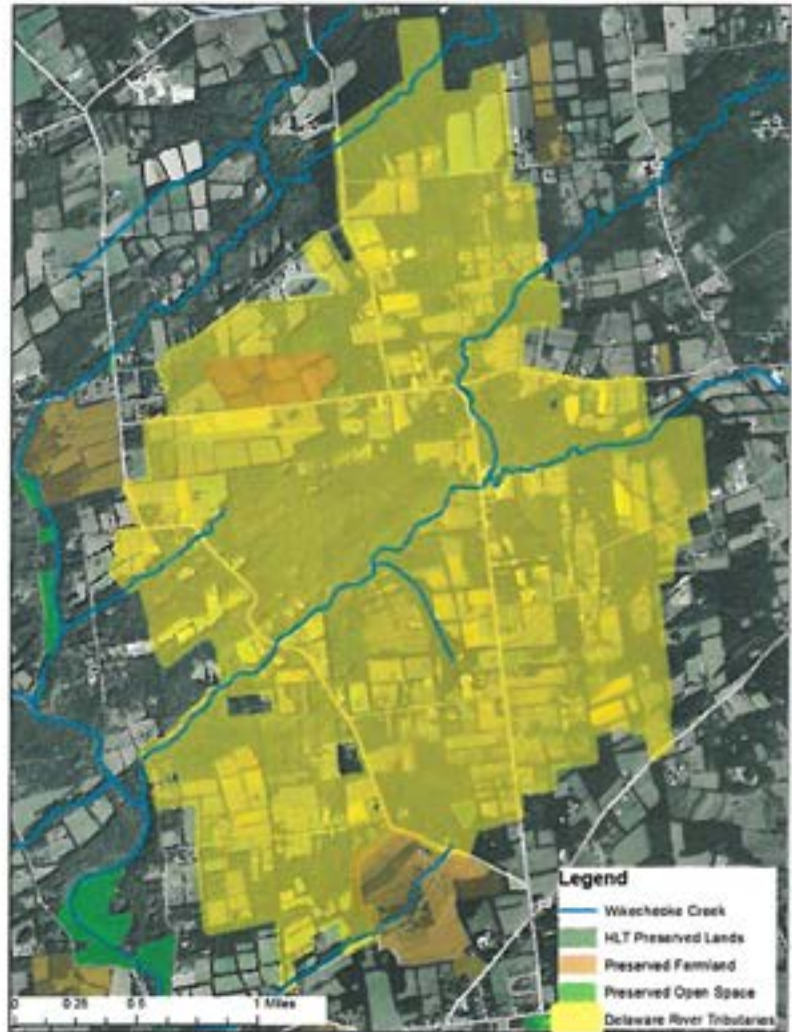


Wickecheoke Creek Headwaters Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for
Preservation – 1,942 acres

Located in Delaware Township, the Wickecheoke Creek Headwaters Preservation Target Area complements the tremendous efforts of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Recently, the D & R Greenway Land Trust has started to work in the Plum Brook, a tributary of the Wickechoeke.

The landscape in this part of the county is a mixture of large forest tracts and productive farmland. The wetlands and stream corridors in the southern portion of this project area provide habitat for the state threatened wood turtle, while the large forest complex provides suitable habitat for several additional threatened species.

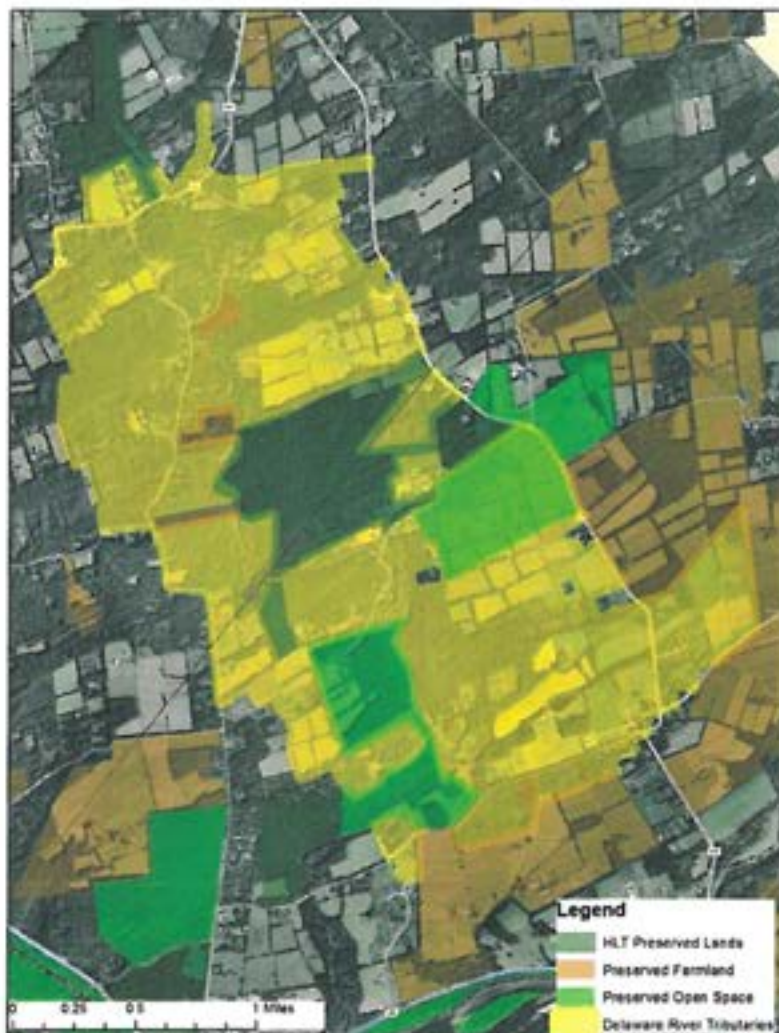


Rosemont Scenic Corridor Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for
Preservation - 894 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-342
acres

Rosemont is an area dotted with historic farm structures and rolling hills. HLT will work to preserve this landscape through continued Farmland and Open Space Preservation. This priority area is located in Kingwood and Delaware Townships and links the Lockatong watershed with the Wickecheoke watershed.

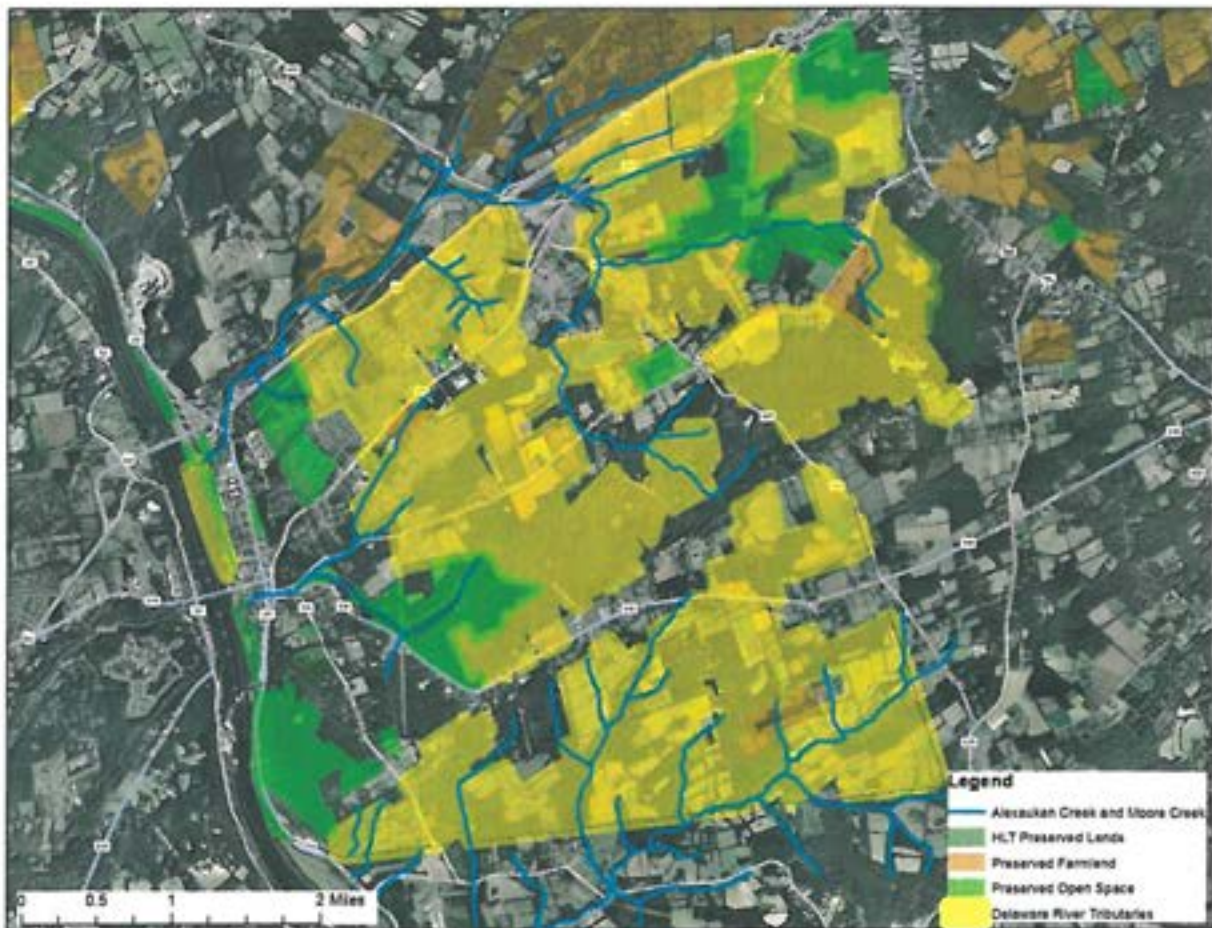


Alexauken Creek & Moore Creek Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 1,897 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-644

Preservation of the Alexauken Creek & Moore Creek Priority Area would help to preserve the rural landscapes that surround the village of Ringoes and the City of Lambertville. Located in rural West Amwell Township, preservation of this area is important to people living in these communities and this area of Hunterdon County. In addition to agricultural and forested areas, the Alexauken Creek and Moore Creek Project Area contains the Goat Hill Natural Heritage Priority Site, described by the Natural Heritage Program as a wooded, diabase hillside with endangered plants. Much of the farmland within this area is identified in the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board plan.

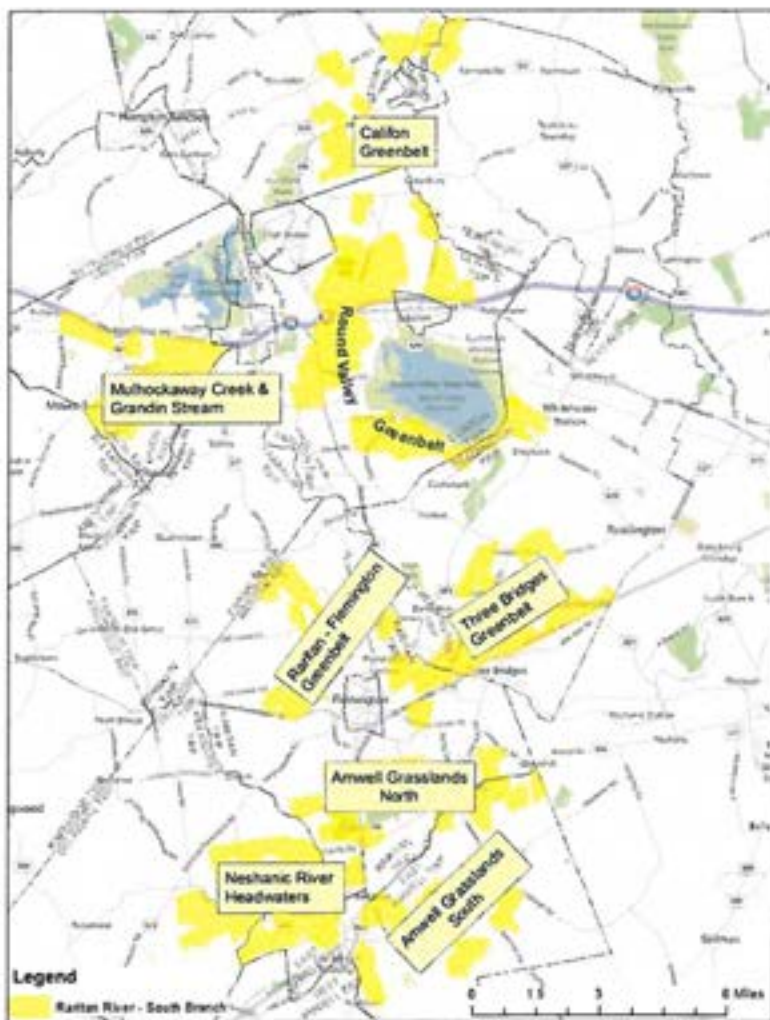


Project Region: South Branch - Raritan River

The South Branch Raritan River Project Area covers portions of the Highlands near Califon south to the agricultural grassland of the Amwell Valley. Preservation of land within this project area is extremely important for water quality and quantity. The South Branch and its associated reservoirs – Round Valley and Spruce Run – provide high quality drinking water for over one million NJ residents.

Portions of this project area also surround Flemington, the developed portions of Raritan Township, and the Village of Ringoes.

HLT goals for this Region include focused efforts on important watershed properties, building connectivity of preserved land; protecting the community character; providing recreational opportunities for the small towns in the Region (Flemington, Califon, Three Bridges); and



protecting important wildlife habitat, including grasslands in the Amwells.

Past Efforts:

HLT began to focus on the South Branch Region in the early 2000s, with projects completed in most of the municipalities and with a multitude of partners.

HLT's Quakertown Preserve in Franklin Township is the combination of two projects with two landowners, Pfaltz and Bodine. The Bodine Woods were preserved in 1999 by landowner Mary

Bodine and Hunterdon Land Trust. This 28-acre tract of woods, with a tributary of the Capoolong Creek, had frontage on Quakertown Road but no accessible parking area to access the trails. The benefit of the Pfaltz acquisition included the preservation of another building lot in Quakertown, and the creation of a safer, easier access for the public to access the Bodine Woods Property for passive recreational pursuits.

(Flemington Raritan Greenbelt Target Area) Case-Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township, Flemington, New Jersey, is the headquarters of Hunterdon Land Trust located in the historic house on the property. There are also several historic agricultural structures, and 42 acres of land. The land consists of agricultural fields, woods, wetlands, and waterways, including a stretch of the Mine Brook, a tributary of the South Branch of the Raritan River. These physical elements and how they have changed through the years tell the story of the farm and its role in the larger community. The farm has been very important to the community in the past and is regarded as a county landmark today. The historic character and resources of the farm will be maintained. This property was acquired by the South Branch Watershed Association and conveyed to HLT in 1999.

(Amwell Grasslands Target Area) Two privately owned farms in East Amwell were preserved in 2011 through the Township farmland preservation program, with a contribution to HLT from Conservation Resources' Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Grant Program, which supports the preservation of grassland bird habitat. One family has lived in this area for generations and was pleased to add their farm to several adjoining preserved farms in East Amwell, maintaining specific wildlife habitat and preserving the rural farming character of the township.

(Round Valley Greenbelt Target Area) In 2010, HLT accepted a conservation easement on Camp Winnewald, a property which has a portion of the Prescott Brook and some forested areas, adjacent to the Round Valley Reservoir.

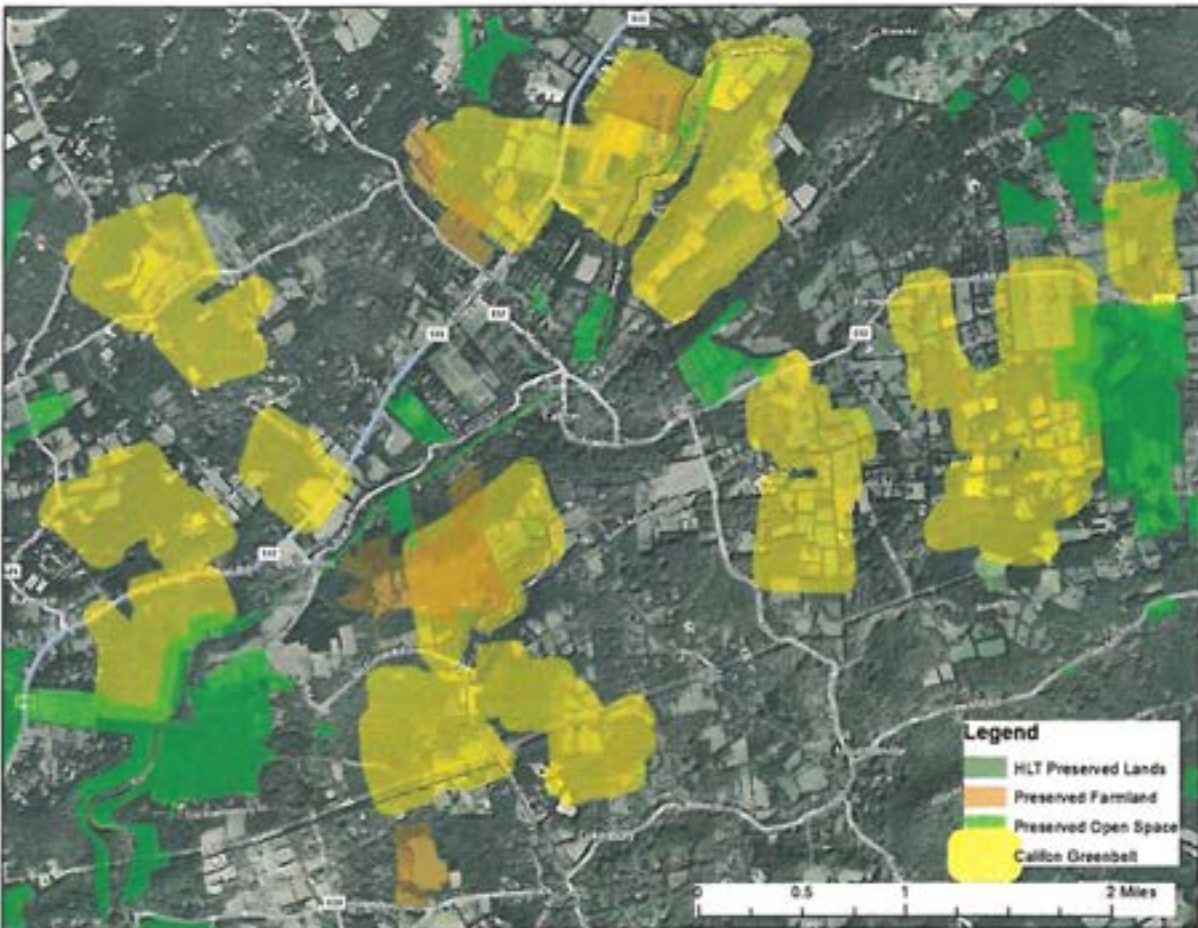
Preservation Partners:

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority and State Green Acres Program are strong partners in this region with the Authority being proactive in identifying priority watershed properties for protection. The municipalities are engaged, have plans and dedicated revenues, but are being conservative given the economic realities and limitations they face. Leverage is the key in this region and more outside sources of funding, such as state and federal funds, are necessary to continue the pace of preservation. A large amount of farmland preservation has already occurred in the Amwell Grasslands Target Area. Partners in the area include New Jersey Conservation Foundation, who preserved the Barron Farm in East Amwell, and the Townships of East Amwell and Raritan who are both active in farmland preservation and D&R Greenway Land Trust which recently preserved Cider Mill Farm.

Target Areas:

The Land Trust has identified seven Target Areas in the South Branch-Raritan River Project Area: **Califon Greenbelt, Round Valley Greenbelt, Grandin and Capoolong, Flemington-Raritan Greenbelt, Three Bridges Greenbelt, Amwell Grasslands North and South, Neshanic River Headwaters.** Descriptions of these Target Areas follow.

Califon Greenbelt Target Area



Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 1,764 acres

The Califon Greenbelt Target Area is located in Lebanon and Tewksbury Townships and surrounds the historic village of Califon. This Target Area includes the Columbia Trail, which spans dozens of miles in Hunterdon and Morris Counties and provides wonderful hiking and biking opportunities. Ken Lockwood Gorge Wildlife Management Area is a popular fishing and hiking destination.

Like most Target Areas in the Highlands of Hunterdon County, the Califon Greenbelt consists of a mixture of forests and farmland. The forest provides habitat to the state endangered bobcat. While the farmland areas are important for many grassland bird species, they are not as extensive as the grassland areas in other parts of the county which are more likely to provide habitat for endangered and threatened bird species.

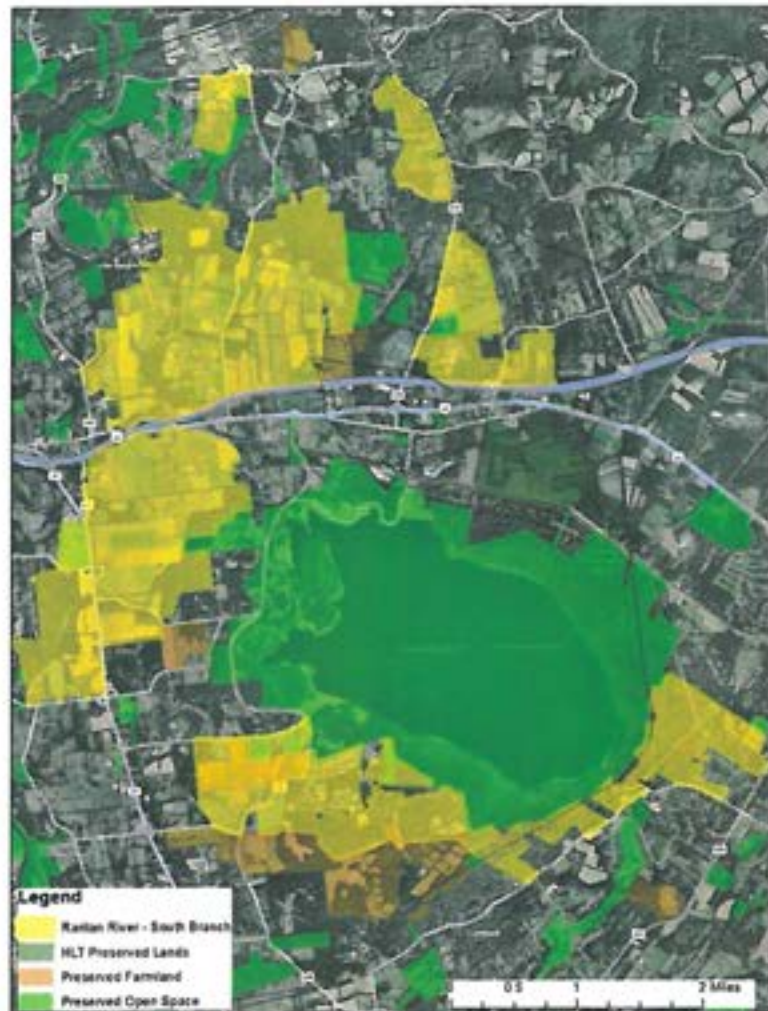
Round Valley Greenbelt Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 3,419 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage- 411 acres

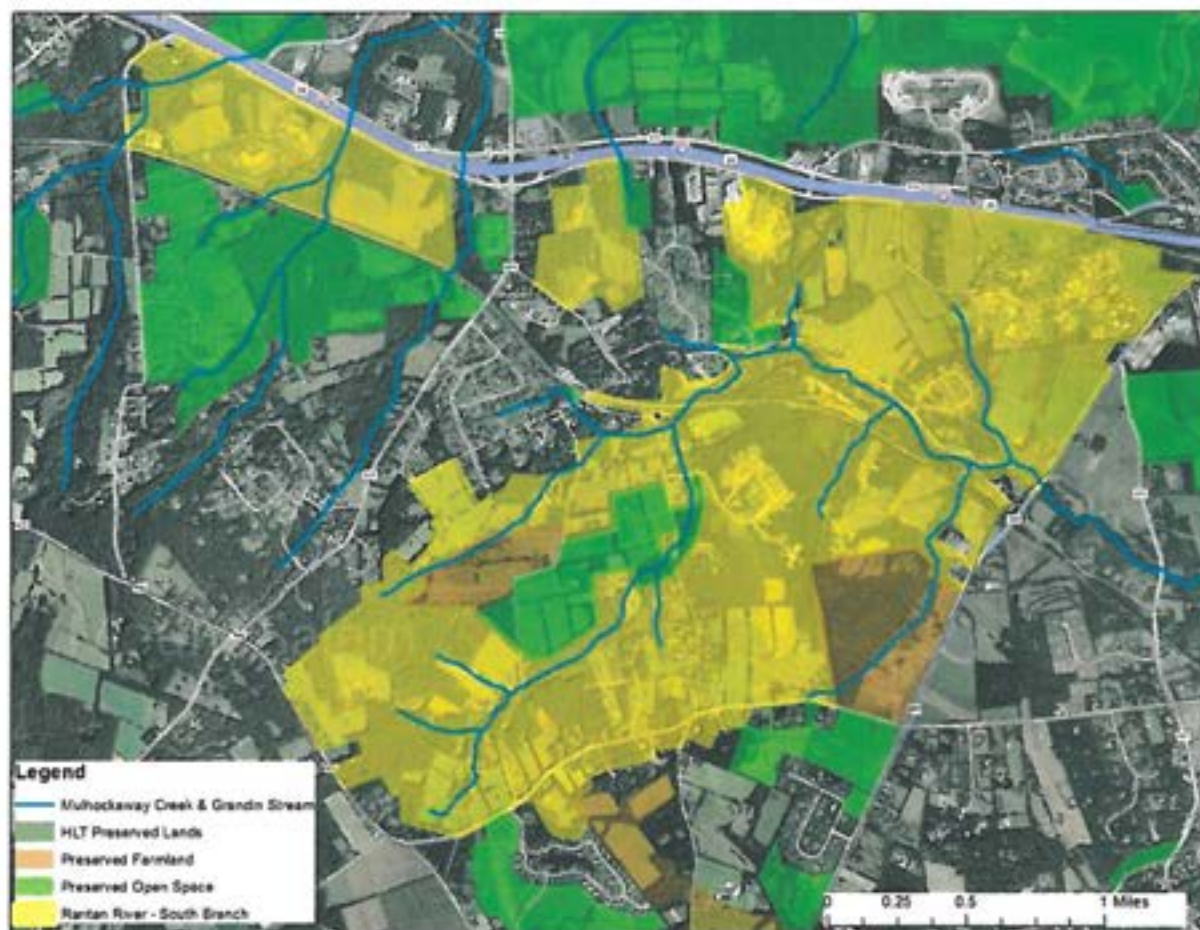
As its name implies, the Round Valley Greenbelt Preservation Target Area encircles Round Valley State Park. Permanent protection of this area would also help to preserve the eastern boundary of the historic Town of Clinton.

Round Valley State Park is a popular state recreation area and supplies drinking water for millions in New Jersey. In partnership with Clinton Township, and with the assistance of Conservation Resources, HLT recently facilitated the preservation of the Windy Acres property, located in close proximity to Round Valley.



In addition to the large state and municipal open space holdings in the area, there are several preserved farms. Round Valley reservoir provides habitat for bald eagles. In addition the forested areas north of route 78/22 provide habitat for the State Endangered bobcat. The agricultural areas to the south of Round Valley Reservoir provide habitat to the State Threatened Coopers Hawk.

Grandin and Capoolong Target Area



Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 1,333 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-120 acres

The Grandin and Capoolong Target Area is located in Union and Franklin Townships. This area includes a number of historically significant farms, and is part of the Clinton Farms Historic District. Hoffman Park is a large County-owned park located in this priority area. There are also several preserved open space parcels owned by Union Township and a few parcels of preserved farmland.

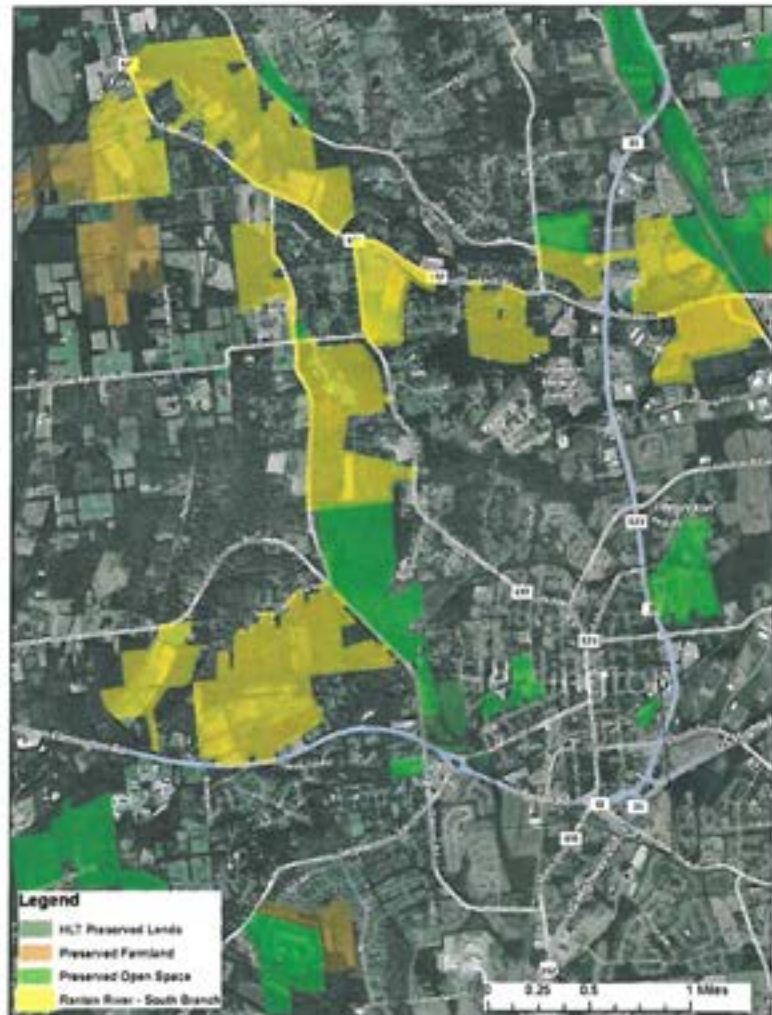
In addition to the State Endangered bobcat, the larger farmland properties provide habitat to the State Threatened Vesper sparrow. Preservation in this area should focus on expanding the preserved farmland area within the Clinton Farms Historic District and expanding Hoffman Park.

Flemington Raritan Greenbelt Target Area

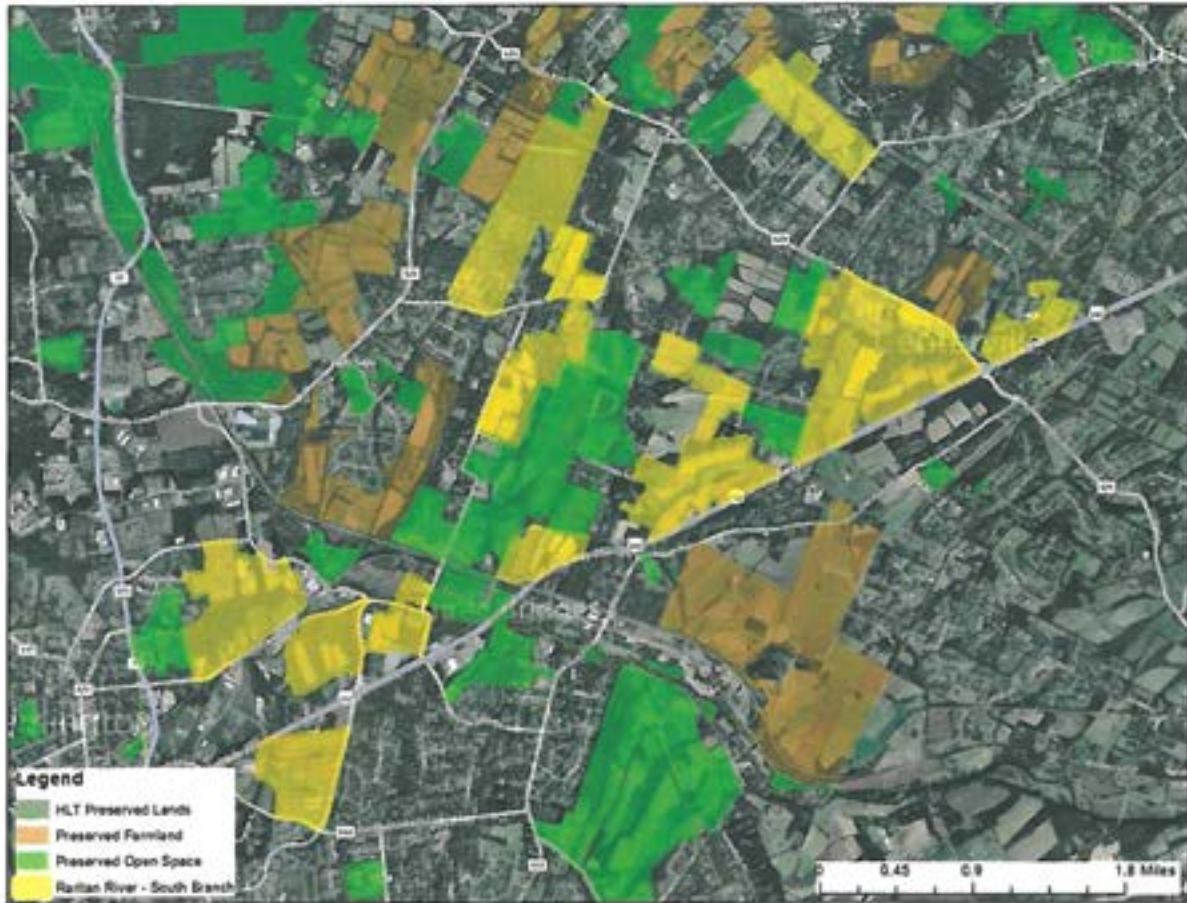
Total Acreage Identified for Preservation - 945 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-46 acres

The Flemington Raritan Greenbelt Target Area is located around Hunterdon Land Trust's Dvoor Farm and consists of several large parcels located near Flemington. Preservation of this area would help to ensure that the remaining rural landscape surrounding Flemington is preserved, including land around the Mine Brook and Walnut Creek.



Three Bridges Greenbelt Target Area



Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 1,581 acres

The Three Bridges Greenbelt Target Area is located in Readington and Raritan Townships and seeks to protect land along the main stem of the South Branch and the remaining large parcels along Route 202. The farms along Route 202 impart a somewhat rural atmosphere to people traveling to Flemington from the east.

There are several large parcels that have already been preserved along the main stem of the South Branch, including the State-owned South Branch Wildlife Management Area and the Hunterdon County-owned Deer Path Park and South Branch Reservation. New Jersey Audubon and Conserve Wildlife Foundation have been actively working with farmers on public and private land, managing the area for the benefit of grassland birds as part of their participation in the Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership.



Amwell Grasslands North and South Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for
Preservation – 1,966 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-179
acres

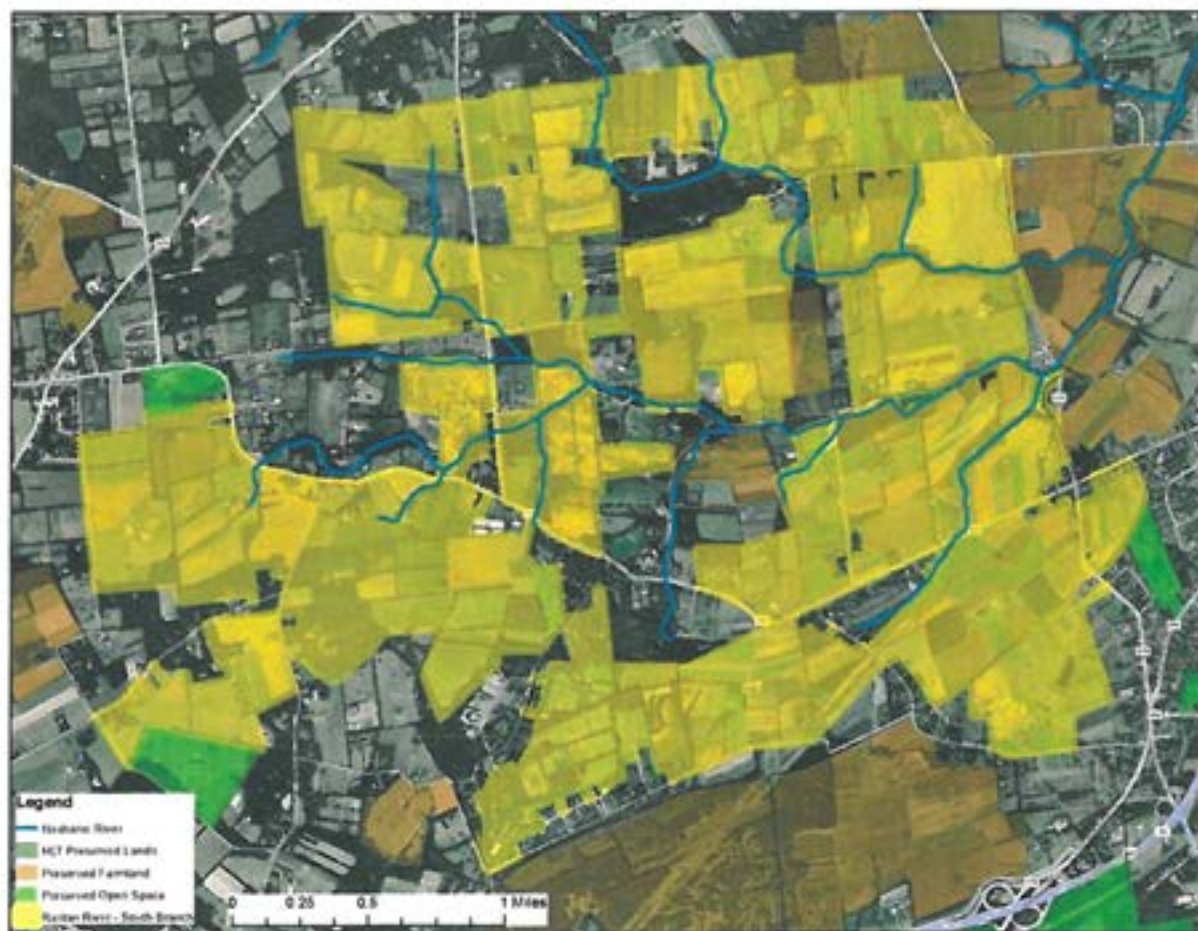
The agricultural landscape of the Amwell Grasslands Target Area is widely recognized as one of the most important areas for threatened and endangered grassland-dependent birds. Located in Raritan and East Amwell Township, virtually this entire area is a Natural Heritage Priority Site, is highlighted in The Landscape Project, and is a focal area of the Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership.



Neshanic River Headwaters Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 2,266 acres

The Neshanic River Headwaters Target Area is located in Delaware and East Amwell Townships. As a major tributary to the South Branch of the Raritan, protection of the headwaters would help to ensure continued water quality within the Raritan basin. The landscape is made up



primarily of farms. Farmland preservation efforts in the region should continue. This is a new Target Area for Hunterdon Land Trust.

Project Region: Sourland Mountain

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation - 862 acres

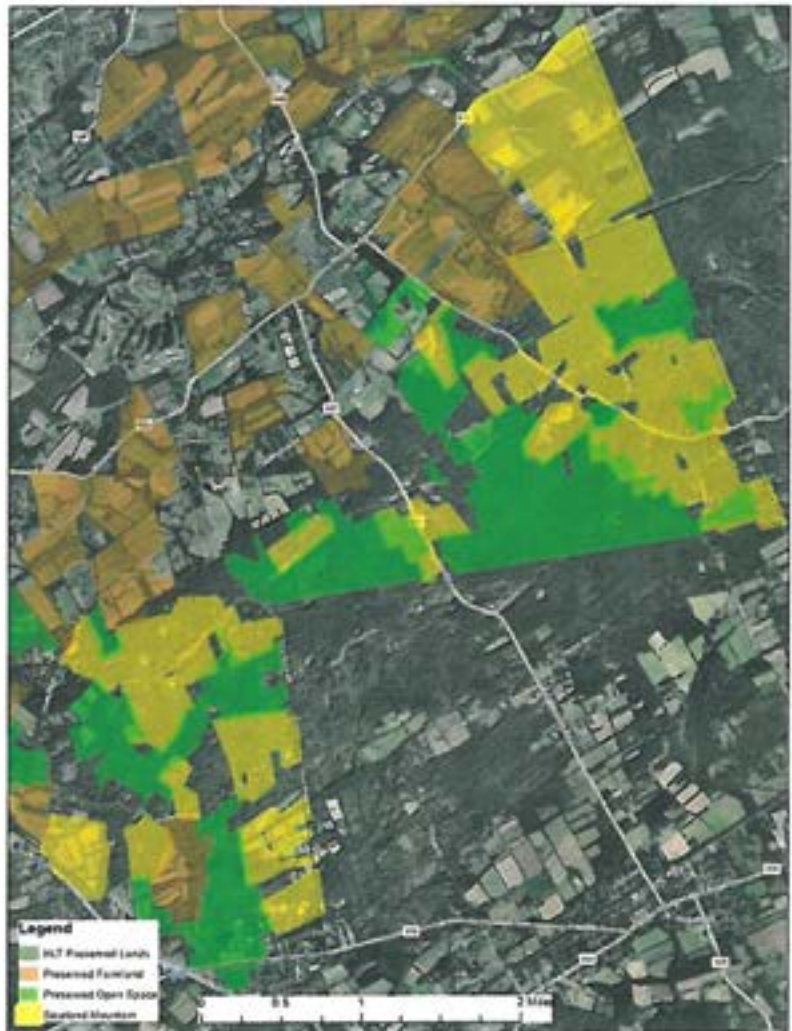
The Sourland Mountain spans three counties and five municipalities and is the largest, most intact forest in Central New Jersey. As such, it is a vitally important area for state threatened and endangered wildlife and migrating birds.

The Hunterdon County portion of the Sourlands is located in East Amwell and West Amwell Townships.

Past Efforts:

Hunterdon County owns and manages the Sourland Mountain Nature Preserve, which links to the NJ Natural Lands Trust's Highfields Preserve in Hopewell Township, Mercer County.

This large preserve also complements preservation efforts undertaken by Somerset County. This is a new Region for Hunterdon Land Trust.



Preservation Partners:

Given the regional significance of this area, there are numerous partners working to preserve the Sourland Forest. These include the Sourland Planning Council, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, NJ Conservation Foundation, D&R Greenway Land Trust, and the Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Partnership (RPWHP). RPWHP is made up of these and several other non-profits and local governments.

Target Areas: The Region and the Target Area are one and the same.

Project Region: North Branch – Raritan River

As the second main stem of the Raritan River, protection of the headwaters of the North Branch of the Raritan River is important to maintain water quality and quantity.

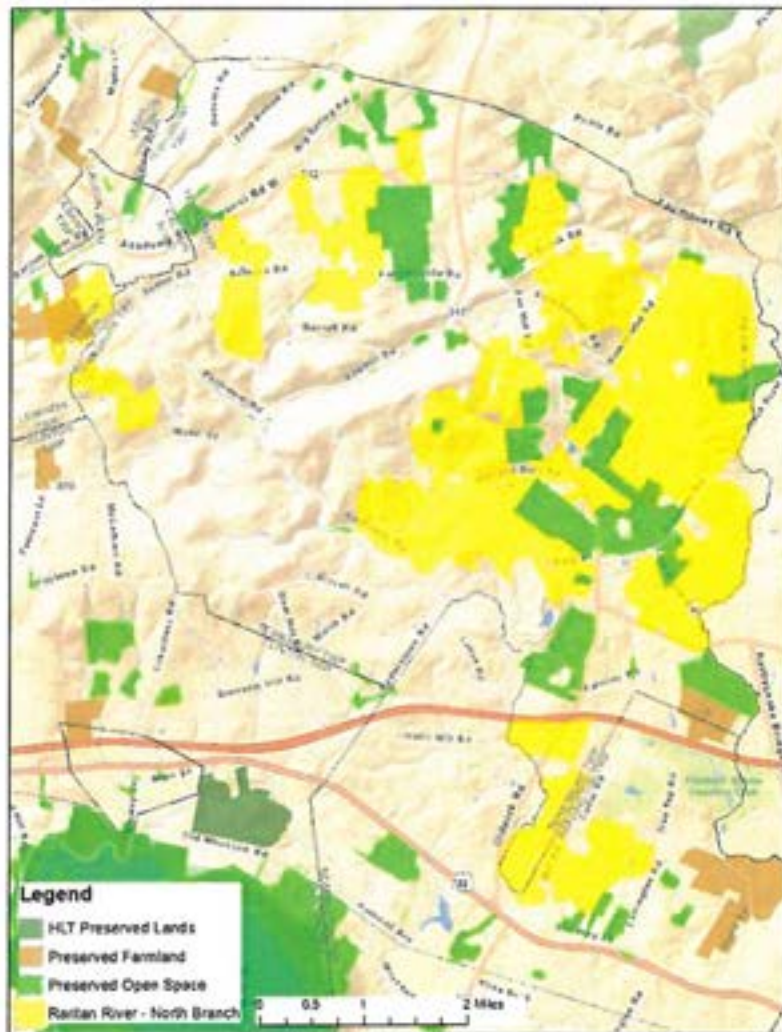
This Project Region is located in Readington and Tewksbury Townships with a very small portion in Lebanon Township (which forms part of the Califon Greenbelt Target Area).

Past Efforts:

This is a new Project Region of focus for Hunterdon Land Trust. **Preservation**

Partners:

The major preservation partners in Lamington are the Tewksbury Land Trust and the Lamington Conservancy, both volunteer-based land trusts that work primarily in the Lamington River area.



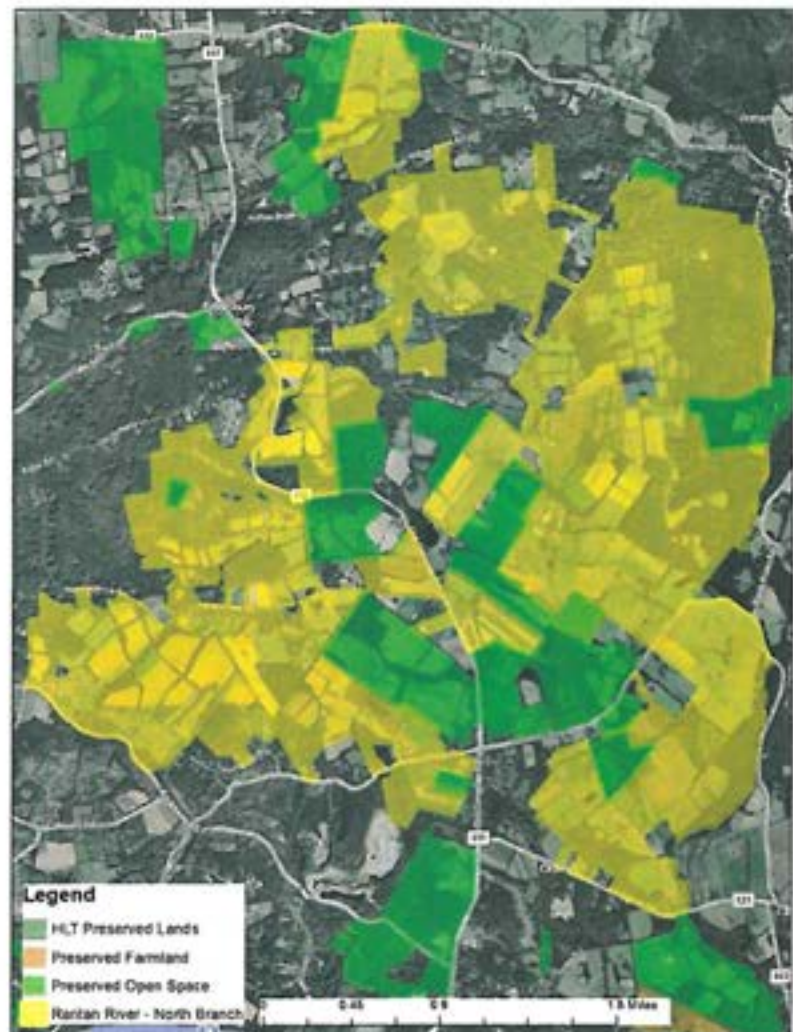
Target Areas: The land trust has identified two Target Areas within the North Branch-Raritan River Project Region: **Lamington River** and **Rockaway River**. Descriptions of these Target Areas follow.



Lamington River Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for
Preservation – 3,011 acres

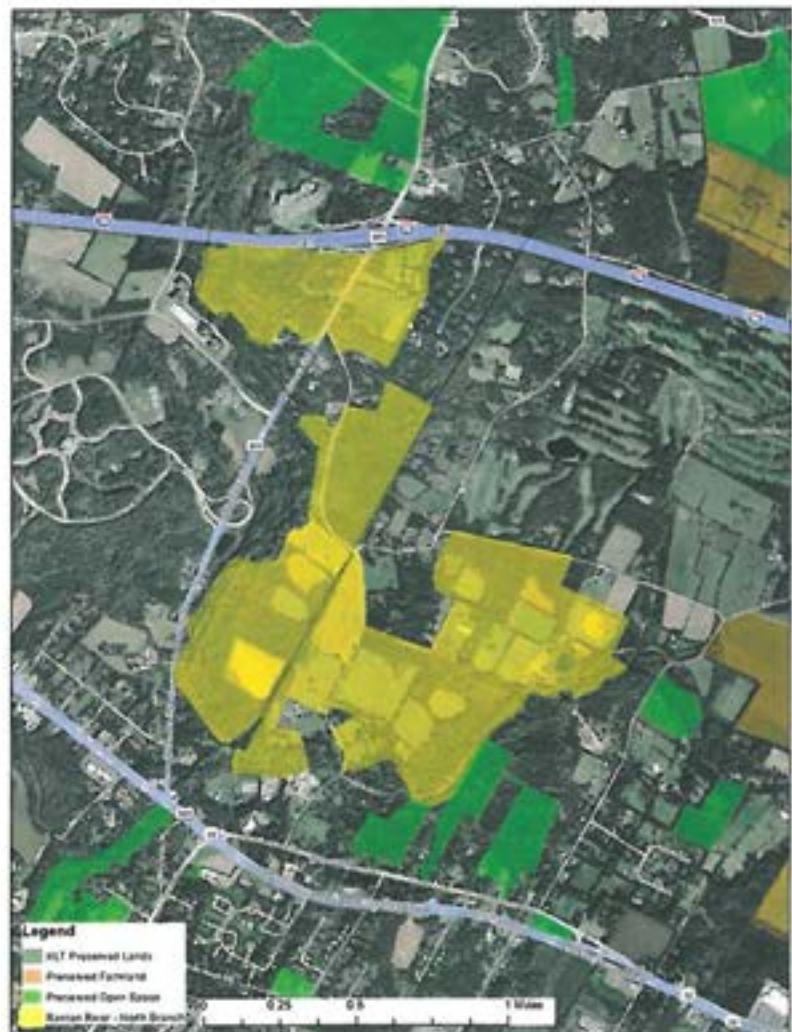
This Target Area surrounds
Hunterdon County's Cold Brook
Reserve in Tewksbury Township.
Preservation of the lands in this
area would also create a greenbelt
around the historic village of
Oldwick and help protect the
Lamington River, a tributary to the
North Branch of the Raritan River.



Rockaway River Target Area

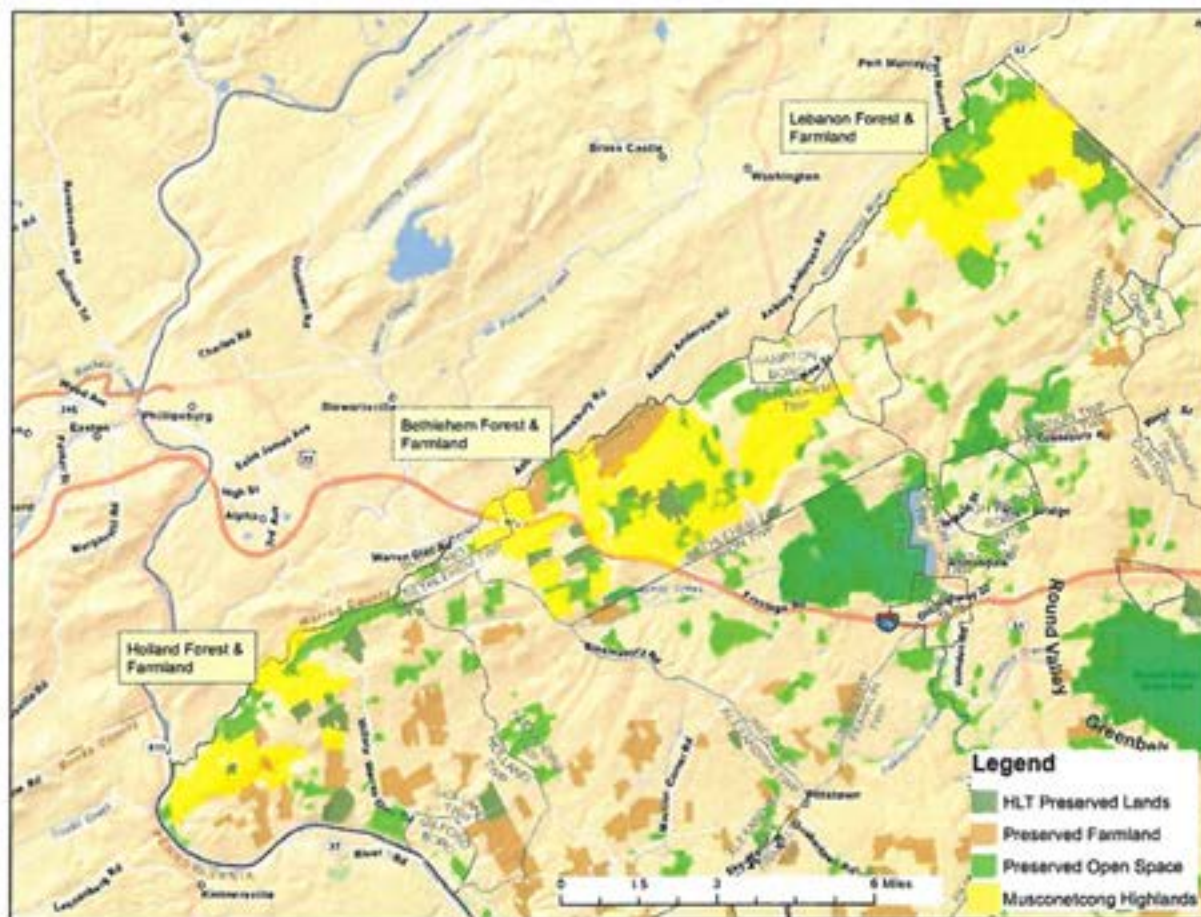
Total Acreage Identified for
Preservation - 524 acres

Just to the south of the
Lamington River Target Area is
the Rockaway River Target Area.
Located in Readington Township,
preservation of these parcels
would help to protect an
important tributary to the North
Branch.



Project Region: Musconetcong Highlands

The steep forested slopes and small patches of agriculture of the Musconetcong Highlands Project Area help to protect the Musconetcong River, a federally designated Wild and Scenic River. Located in Bethlehem, Holland and Lebanon Townships, preservation of this region would maintain its unique character and protect the Musconetcong River. The Musconetcong



River drains a 157.6 square mile watershed area in northern New Jersey, and as a major tributary to the Delaware River, is part of the 12,755 square mile Delaware River watershed. There are 5,045 acres of parks in the watershed, with hundreds of acres of park land along the Musconetcong River itself. The river valley provides for views of mature forests, farmlands and historic villages.

Regionally important populations of wildlife and critical habitat for state listed threatened, endangered or rare species are present within the river corridor. The Musconetcong River watershed lies entirely within the New Jersey Highlands Region, a landscape of national importance as determined by the U.S. Forest Service and within the Atlantic Flyway, one of four major migratory bird routes in North America.

With many of its tributaries being trout production streams, the Musconetcong River is one of the finest trout fishing streams in New Jersey. At periods of higher flows, the river is also an excellent paddling river. There are miles of hiking trails, particularly in the upper end of the corridor at Allamuchy-Stevens and Point Mountain State Parks.

Past Efforts:

Hunterdon Land Trust helped to preserve the Crystal Springs Property, which is now part of Teetertown Ravine Nature Preserve.

In Bethlehem Township, open space properties include the Musconetcong Wildlife Management Area and the numerous areas that Hunterdon Land Trust has helped preserve including the Jugtown Mountain Reserve, Tower Hill Reserve, Reilly and Ahlemeyer Preserves, Roerig property, Heilemann property, and Springhouse Associates property.

The Roerig property directly adjoins two county parks: Jugtown and Tower Hill in Bethlehem Township. HLT partnered with NJWSA and the Township to preserve 40 acres, create a link on the Highlands Trail and connect these two county parks and two other properties already preserved by NJWSA with HLT help, the Reilly and Ahlemeyer properties. This property consists of woodlands and some cleared forested areas now in succession after 20 years of no cutting. Mulhockaway Creek, part of the Upper Raritan Watershed, crosses the property and runs into the Spruce Run Reservoir area. The property has scenic vistas and several wetland areas.

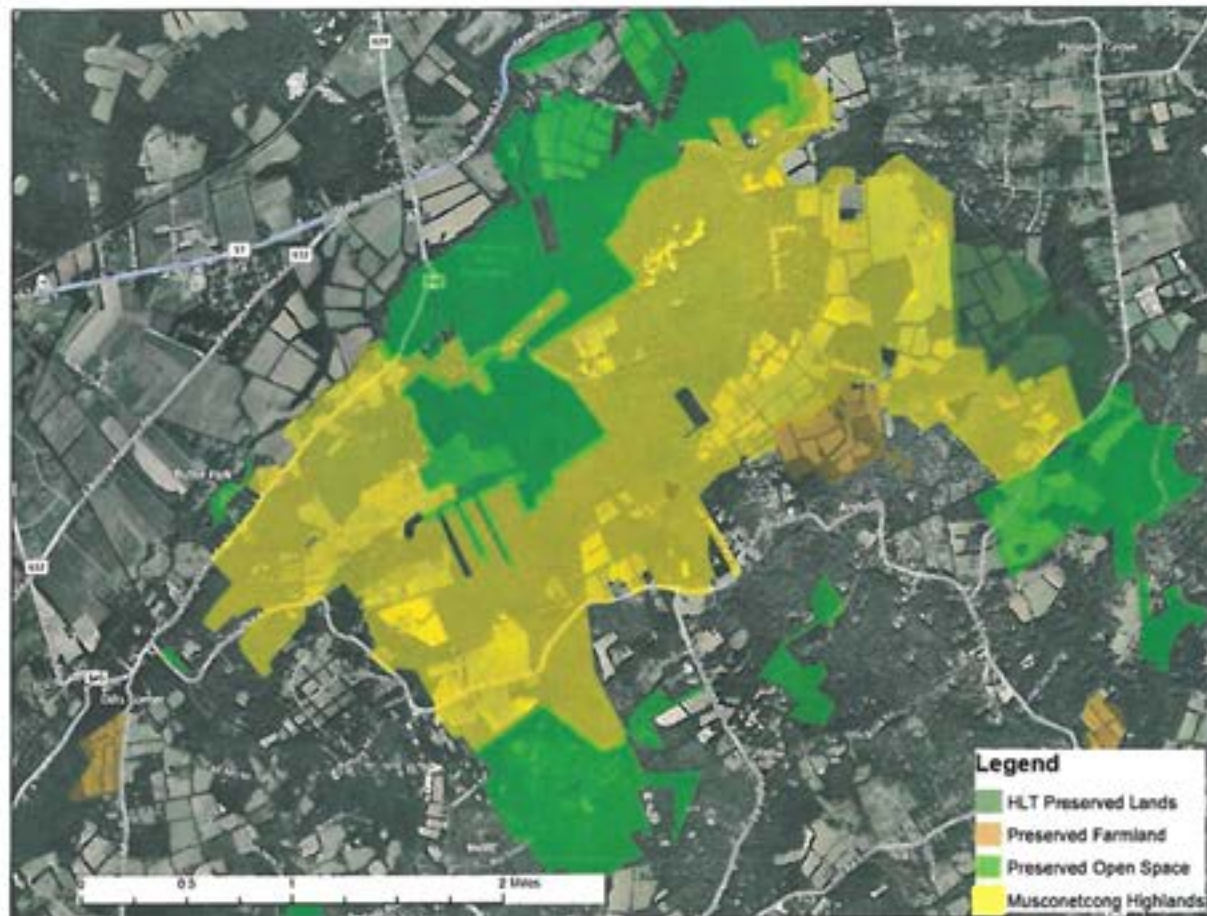
Preservation Partners:

The main funding and management partners in this area are Hunterdon County, the State of New Jersey Green Acres Program and the municipalities.

Target Areas: The land trust identified three Target Areas within the Musconetcong Highlands Project Region: **Lebanon Forest & Farmland**, **Bethlehem Forest & Farmland**, and **Holland Forest & Farmland**. Descriptions of these Target Areas follow.

Lebanon Forest & Farmland Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 1,937 acres



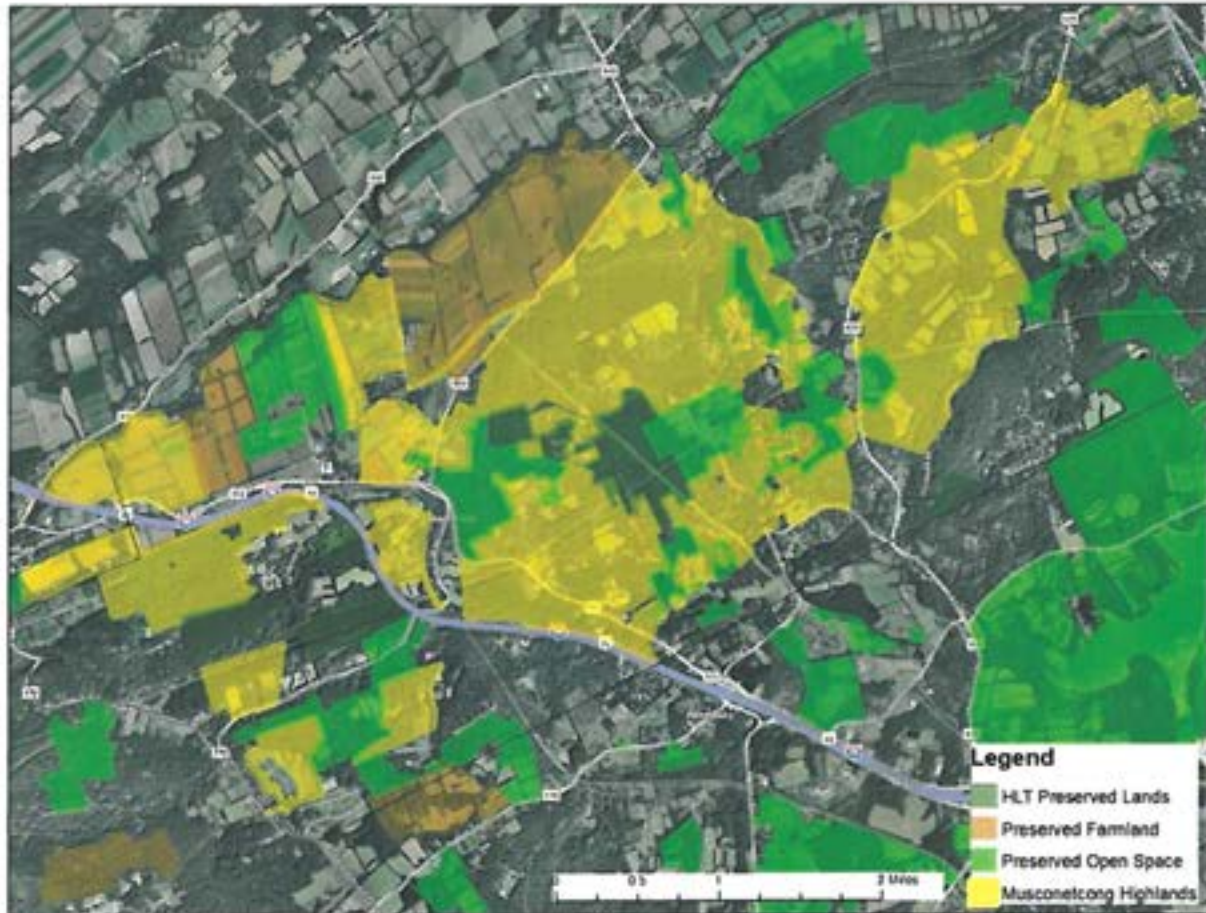
Total HLT preserved acreage- 290 acres

Point Mountain, the Musconetcong River Reservation, and Teetertown Ravine Nature Preserve are extremely scenic and popular Hunterdon County Parks within this Target Area. The Musconetcong River is one of the most popular places in New Jersey to fish for native trout. The banks of the Musconetcong provide Bald Eagle Foraging Habitat and the forests in this regions are habitat for the state endangered bobcat.

Bethlehem Forest & Farmland Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 2,455 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-589 acres

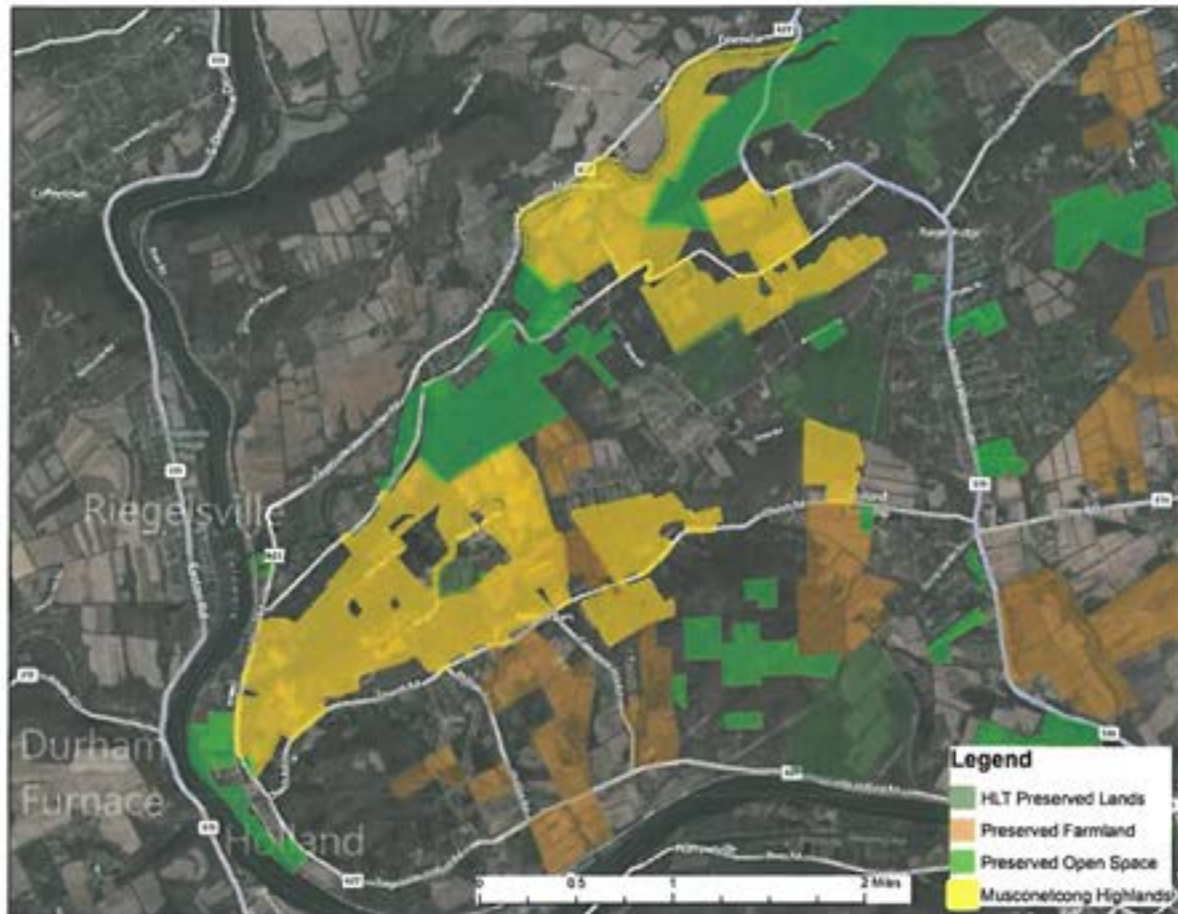


The Bethlehem Forest & Farmland Target Area boasts large areas of fertile, preserved farmland along the Musconetcong River. In addition to farmland with statewide important soils, this area provides habitat to the federally listed bog turtle.

Holland Forest & Farmland Target Area

Total Acreage Identified for Preservation – 871 acres

Total HLT preserved acreage-809 acres



Spanning the lower portion of the Musconetcong River to its confluence with the Delaware River, the Holland Forest & Farmland Target Area is a place HLT has been working in for the last several years. Hunterdon County's Musconetcong Reserve and the State's Musconetcong River Wildlife Management Area provide public access to the river. They also form an important part of the string of preserved land along the entire length of the Musconetcong River.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This Land Preservation Plan provides a bold vision for the future of Hunterdon County and the Hunterdon Land Trust. The preservation of the land identified in this report is highly desirable and would ensure high quality drinking water, a productive farming community, adequate wildlife habitat and a high quality of life for Hunterdon County residents. However, preservation on this large scale cannot be accomplished all at once, or by any single organization. Obviously, a relatively small organization like Hunterdon Land Trust needs to be strategic in its on-the-ground efforts to preserve land, and to prioritize its efforts.

Within each of these target areas, unpreserved parcels over 40 acres represent a total of 47,827 acres. Of the 22 Target Areas identified in the plan, the HLT board of trustees has decided to initially focus on six areas:

Flemington Raritan Greenbelt, Frenchtown to Stockton, Hakiwokake Creek, Bethlehem Forest & Farmland, Round Valley Greenbelt, and Lockatong Creek. Further, the land trust has prioritized two Target Areas, the Wickecheoke Creek Headwaters and Lamington Greenbelt, to support other groups (e.g., New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Readington Township) who have established themselves as leaders in these areas:

Hunterdon Land Trust's existing Criteria for Land Acquisition should be amended to include these areas.

New Criteria for Land Acquisition projects

The following criteria shall be used by the Hunterdon Land Trust in determining which properties will be selected for preservation efforts:

1. The Hunterdon Land Trust is presently working proactively within the following six target areas as identified in the 2011 Comprehensive Land Preservation Plan: Flemington Raritan Greenbelt, Frenchtown to Stockton, Hakiwokake Creek, Bethlehem Forest & Farmland, Round Valley Greenbelt, and Lockatong Creek. Properties in these Target Areas will be given consideration for preservation.
2. Properties must display important environmental values, good recreational values, good scenic value, important historic values, or important agricultural value.
3. Properties that adjoin other preserved lands will be given preference over equivalent properties that stand alone.
4. Properties that are believed to be threatened with imminent development will be given priority over properties without development pressure.
5. Properties that represent good value will be given high priority. Properties with owners willing to make donations or partial donations will be given priority over properties that require full fair market value for preservation.
6. Preference will be given to properties over 40 acres.

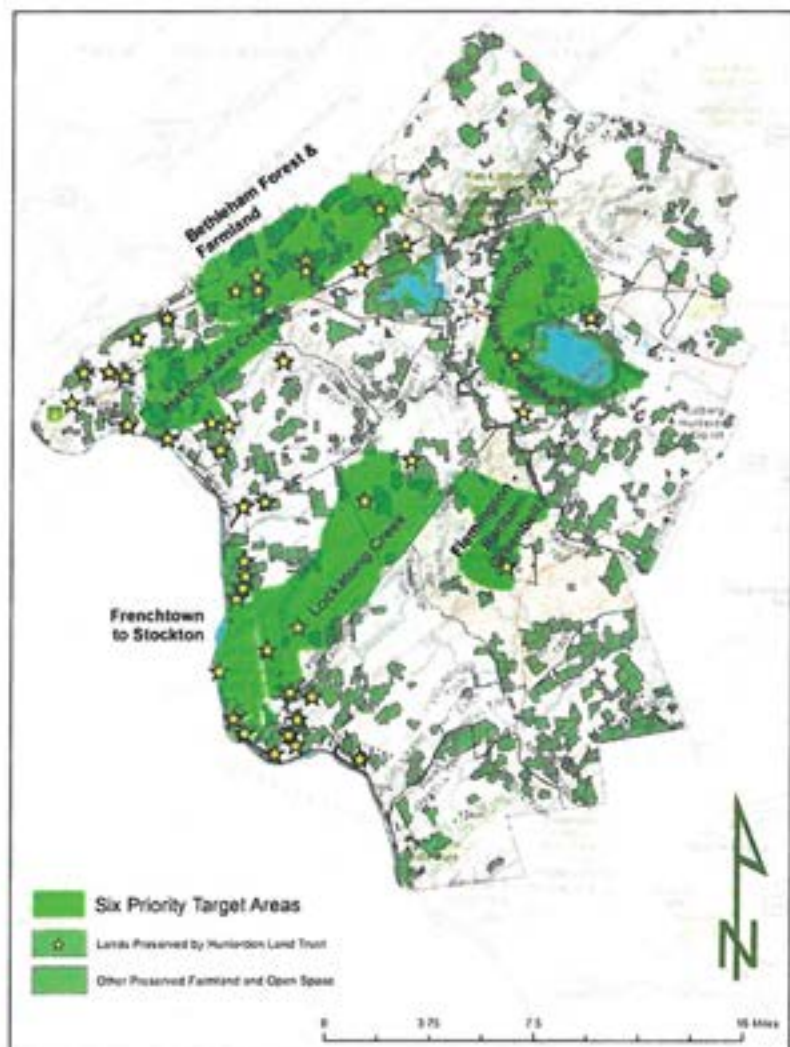
HLT staff will expend effort to proactively contact landowners within these six target areas. They will work with other non-profits, and local and county governments to help preserve these lands. The total acreage of identified parcels over 40 acres within these six areas is 17,000 acres.

Even though HLT will focus on these areas, all 17,000 acres will not have willing landowners, funding partners, nor meet all of the criteria developed by the board. Although ambitious, this provides ample opportunity to develop projects within the region and attain the goal of strategically preserving 10,000 acres.

At the same time, the remaining 16 target areas will not be ignored. Where HLT can rely on other non-profits or governments to take the lead in these areas, it will gladly do so. If projects develop within the other 16 target areas, HLT Land Acquisition Committee and Board of Trustees will evaluate whether or not the project could and should best be completed by another entity, or, if not, whether HLT could take the lead on the project.

It is fully expected that the six target areas will change over time. The board will review these areas every year and make revisions to the plan as appropriate. For example, HLT trustees may realize significant success in these six target areas and feel that they can start to work in additional areas. Another reason to change target areas is the fact that the ability and willingness of certain local governments to preserve land may change over time. In general during the last few years, we have seen more reluctance by many towns to preserve open space. A lot of this reluctance is due to the current fiscal crisis as was discussed earlier in the report. If HLT were to find that local funding and support was questionable or non-existent in one of its target areas, it might switch and refocus its efforts in a community where there is more substantial support.

With land preservation at the core of its mission, Hunterdon Land Trust will continue to work on educating residents in the other 16 target areas on the importance for conservation in these areas. The rationale that was used in the development of this plan will provide the basis for communicating the urgency for protecting these areas.



Appendices

Appendix 1, Land Preservation Protection Priorities

Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

Updated 10/22/05

Approved by Land Acquisition Committee: 9/05

Approved by full board: 9/05

Land protection project policies and selection processes:

The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance is committed to fulfilling its mission of preserving and protecting the rural character and natural resources of Hunterdon County, New Jersey. This is accomplished through education and outreach to landowners; acquisition of conservation easements or fee interest in properties; and stewardship and management of preserved properties. The staff and board of the land trust agree to the following process to facilitate land protection projects:

1. Staff/board will fully investigate all potential projects through conversations with the landowner; site visits to the properties; and scrutiny of the public conservation value, and agricultural and natural resource value of the property;
2. Staff/board will evaluate each potential project using adopted Land Protection Project Criteria and checklist
3. Staff shall ensure that proper due diligence is conducted for each transaction to reduce risk to the organization and meet obligations of the Green Acres program. This shall include a complete environmental assessment, title search and insurance commitment, survey, legal review and approval of all documents, and appraisals.
4. In the event of a donation for which the donor seeks a charitable income tax deduction, staff/board shall inform the landowner of Internal Revenue Code §170(h) standards for deductibility (see attached) and encourage landowners to seek professional counsel and advice with regard to these requirements. This is not meant to construe that HLTA board/staff shall certify to the value of the donation.
5. The Land Acquisition and Stewardship Committee of the board shall review all proposed projects and make recommendations to the full board of trustees to move forward with projects and make expenditures related to due diligence activities;
6. As per the by-laws adopted in 1996, the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee shall have final approval authority for all land protection projects and budgets related to expenditures to support land preservation activities;
7. HLTA shall make all reasonable attempts to receive 100% compensation of technical expenses, including appraisal, survey, title, legal, and environmental assessments, for each project through the following sources: Green Acres funding, landowner contributions, municipal contributions, non-profit contributions, and any other possible source.
8. HLTA shall make all reasonable efforts to secure contributions to our permanent stewardship endowment fund for both conservation easement defense and monitoring and property management. When conservation easements and fee properties are purchased at full fair market value, the board recommends an endowment donation of \$5,000 or 1% of the purchase price, whichever is higher. When conservation easements and fee properties are donated or

sold at a significant bargain, a cash endowment is required and will be negotiated based on factors such as the size of the property, the restrictions of the easement, and the financial abilities of the donor. The board understands that individual circumstances may restrict the size of a donation and reserves the right to negotiate endowments based on this. Staff is responsible for negotiating endowments subject to board approval.

9. HLTA shall make all reasonable efforts to manage fee owned properties in accordance with management plans that address natural resource protection and provide passive public recreational opportunities.
10. HLTA shall not enter into contracts to purchase property or conservation easements from current Trustees. Transactions involving current Trustees shall be limited to donations of property or conservation easements; all land acquisition criteria and procedures shall apply. Purchase acquisitions involving former trustees may not be negotiated until one year after the board member has resigned or their board term has expired.

Criteria for Land Acquisition

The following criteria shall be used by the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance in determining which properties will be selected for preservation efforts:

*The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance is presently working within the following four project areas: The Highlands, The Delaware River corridor, the Lockatong Creek corridor and the Alexauken Creek corridor. Properties in one of these project areas will be given consideration for preservation.

*Properties must display important environmental values, good recreational values, good scenic value, important historic values, or important agricultural value.

*Properties that adjoin other preserved lands will be given preference over equivalent properties that stand alone.

*Properties that are believed to be threatened with imminent development will be given priority over properties without development pressure.

*Properties that represent good value will be given high priority. Properties with owners willing to make donations or partial donations will be given priority over properties that require full fair market value for preservation.

*Properties that present opportunities for easy preservation will be given priority over highly complex and time-consuming projects.

*Projects which can result in preservation of land that has met all or some of the above criteria and will not require onerous management practices will be given priority.

Appendix 2, Workshop Agenda

Hunterdon Land Trust
Conservation Plan Board Workshop
Saturday, June 4, 2011

Purpose of Workshop:

Help HLT staff and trustees develop criteria and select and map the priority lands which HLT will seek to protect in the next 5 years to achieve the new HLT goal to “*Preserve 10,000 acres of land with Ecological, Agricultural, Scenic, Recreational and Community value to ensure meaningful land preservation throughout Hunterdon County.*” The Workshop will consist of an introductory briefing, and two interactive exercises. The first exercise will focus on identifying the potential places to be protected. The second exercise will assist in prioritizing project areas by focusing on information to identify the specific project areas that can realistically be protected more easily.

Introduction and Background (9:10 AM – 9:30 AM)

Introduce participants and facilitator

Review agenda

Provide background for discussions, including:

 HLT Strategic Plan

 Recent Organizational Assessment for LTA Accreditation

 Review existing data and priorities of other conservation organizations

 Provide the group with information that exists about the four resources areas

 Identify areas of protection and begin to build a framework for prioritizing these areas.

- *Ecological* - NJ ENSP Landscape Plan; RPWHP Plan and Hunterdon County Open Space Plan
- *Agricultural* – Areas identified in SADC County Plan; Primary soils
- *Scenic* – Historic sites, NJDOT scenic roads and Hunterdon Co. Open Space Plan –
 and
- *Recreational value* - Areas identified in Hunterdon County Open Space Plan

Discussion of deliverables which will result from workshop

First Exercise: (9:30 AM – 11:30 AM)

Participants will discuss the areas which they think should be priorities for preservation, based upon the briefing materials and their personal knowledge of the County, and why these areas should be a priority. We will spend 20 minutes, more or less, on each of the following categories: ecological; agricultural; scenic and recreational/community importance. At the end of this session, we will mark up a large map of Hunterdon County to show the rough boundaries of potential project areas. We will also spend some time as needed, to add some additional “programmatic” projects or projects areas, to the extent that these projects or project areas can be

identified, such as important tracts in urban areas, or priorities that may not otherwise be captured by the other categories.

(11:30AM – 12:15 PM) Lunch Break

Second Exercise: (12:15 PM – 2:00 PM)

Provide the group with information on what protecting 10,000 acres actually looks like, in the scale of the entire County, and help to develop a consensus on how to prioritize potential project the areas by taking into such things a s available partners, funding opportunities, and community and political support for protecting land. **(10 minutes)**

Discuss some potential criteria to be used to conduct a reality check of the potential project areas that are likely to be easier and more difficult to protect. **(20 minutes)**

For example:

- Funding opportunities and challenges, e.g. where the SADC will fund; RPWHP areas; County open space; Townships with open space funds that are interested in protecting land, areas where partners are active or not
- Landowner willingness – identify areas where staff and trustees know willing landowners with an interest in protecting their lands
- Community and elected official support – those townships that have funds and are willing and able to contribute to open space or farmland acquisition
- Size – identify the properties based on size and provide a tally of this breakdown:
 - o over 500 acres;
 - o 200-400 acres
 - o 100-200 acres
 - o 40-100 acres

Apply criteria to select 12-15 of the potential project areas where HLT should take the lead or be a willing partner to other organizations. **(1 hour)**

Participants then are provided with two dots/votes to rank the priority of these 12-15 project areas. **(15 minutes – discussion and lobbying encouraged)**

Discussion of Outreach Efforts for the Draft Plan. (2:00 PM – 2:20 PM)

- o Publication of draft external map of project areas
- o Posting of draft map at Farmer's Market for public markup and comments
- o Other forms of outreach to public and partners
- o Preparation and publication of final plan

Summary and Wrap-Up, and Adjournment (2:20 PM – 2:30 PM)

Appendix 3, Acreage of Land Targeted for Preservation Per Target Area

Target Area	Identified Acreage
Alexauken Creek & Moore Creek	4,738
Amwell Grasslands North	1,966
Amwell Grasslands South	1,291
Bethlehem Forest & Farmland	2,455
Califon Greenbelt	1,764
Grandin and Carpoolong	1,333
Frenchtown Greenbelt	1,922
Frenchtown to Stockton	2,271
Hakihokake Creek	2,455
Holland Forest & Farmland	871
Lamington River	3,011
Lebanon Forest & Farmland	1,937
Lockatong Creek	5,529
Milford to Frenchtown	531
Neshanic River Headwaters	2,266
Nishisakawick Creek	2,882
Flemington Raritan Greenbelt	945
Riegelsville to Milford	438
Rockaway River Headwaters	524
Rosemont Scenic Corridor	894
Round Valley Greenbelt	3,419
Sourland Mountain	862
Three Bridges Greenbelt	1,581
Wickecheoke Creek Headwaters	1,942
	47,827